JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

teleplay by

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ACT I

INT. CAVE TUNNEL - DAY

A FLASHLIGHT GLARES -- a BALD TIBETAN WORKER shuffles through a dusty passageway lugging a top-heavy duffel bag stuffed with pick-axes. We FOLLOW as the Bald Worker huffs and puffs, a bored look on his face -- a man just doing his job. He ducks through a hole into:

INT. MAIN DIG - DAY

where the passage opens into a HUGE CAVERN -- an archaeological dig: more native workers slaving away, gargoyles, pottery, ancient stone walls, and a twenty-foot-high EGYPTIAN STATUE towering over it all.

Our Bald Worker finally ends his journey and rests his pick-axes against a rickety saw horse. The sawhorse CREAKS. He lights a cigarette. A BEARDED WORKER a few feet away notices his slacking-off and starts to berate his colleague in Tibetan. The Bald Worker sneers and gives him the Tibetan equivalent of "the finger."

And that's when the pick-axes break through the old saw horse and SMASH against a stone wall. Everyone turns -- bricks start tumbling inward like dominoes as the wall crumbles. After a few dust-filled seconds a gaping four-foot-square hole opens into darkness.

The work crew shuffles over to see what happened. The Bearded Worker starts YELLING at the Bald Worker -- something probably to the effect of: "now you've done it!"

Then a BLAST OF LIGHT shoots out the hole. The Bearded Worker SCREAMS in pain -- his retinas burned away. The rest of the workers stumble back as the LIGHT FLASHES...

And GAS starts to billow out of the blazing opening...

EXT. DIG SITE - DAY

Sheer mountains rise high into the sky. A couple of trucks labeled "Lord Industries" are parked amidst the hustle of the dig support group. At a table of artifacts are PROFESSOR DAVID CAMBELL and his assistant ANDREW HELFER. Cambell is in his early forties, average build, tousled hair, and a look of pure glee on his face -- a man just loving his job.

DAVID
Important? Yeah, I'd say it's important. An almost perfectly preserved Egyptian burial ground thousands of miles away in Tibet. It's unbelievable.

ANDREW
So do we call Max now?

DAVID
Not yet. Maxwell Lord can have his fun when I'm done with mine. I just wish Janet were here to see this.

ANDREW
You should have brought her.

DAVID
No. She needs to be home. It's bad enough my son never gets to spend time with me.

And that's when muffled SHRIEKS echo from the cave. David and Andrew quickly walk over. A couple of Workers start to go in. Gas seeps from the entrance. David holds them back.

DAVID
Wait. I'm going in alone.

He grabs a flashlight and a gas mask -- and walks into the cave.

INT. MAIN DIG

The light is gone -- remnants of sickly gas swirl around the LIFELESS BODIES of the entire dig crew. David Cambell stands at the cavern's entry wearing the gas mask -- devastated. Something terribly close to him has gone terribly wrong. A GLOWING grabs his attention.

It's the hole. Something inside it is silhouetted in an unearthly radiance. David carefully walks over to the opening. Inside:

A BLACK HELMET -- sitting on an dark pedestal. Sharp angles, ugly protrusions, pointed horns. There is something corrupt and vile about this thing.

Cambell slowly reaches in. The instant he touches it, the GLOWING disappears. He pauses for a second. Then he pulls the Black Helmet out of its ancient tomb.

EXT. DIG SITE - DAY

David Cambell steps out of the opening with the Black Helmet in his hands. He rips his gas mask off.

ANDREW
David. What happened?

DAVID
Break out the rest of the gas masks. There's been some kind of toxic explosion. Someone find out if there's a doctor in the village.

ANDREW
(nodding to Helmet)
What is it?

DAVID
I don't know, but we're taking it to New York. Now call Maxwell Lord.

The dig crew springs into action as we TILT UP TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE HILL - DAY

Overlooking the entire dig and unseen by those below, a small group of TIBETAN MONKS stand quietly on the ledge. They look down at the proceedings with solemn expressions -- then turn and slip away into the hills.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - CENTRAL PARK - DAY - AERIAL VIEW

SUPER: "A world a lot like our own..."

SWOOSH!-- A GREEN STREAK OF LIGHT rockets into frame from behind us and dips earthward.

SUPER: "...Only different"

INT. 5TH AVENUE BUS - DAY

As the bus stops, THREE YOUNG PUNKS with knives push their way on, two through the rear door, the Leader through the front.

PUNK LEADER
Cough up your money quick and easy-like and no body gets the shiv.

The other two punks move through the bus rapidly collecting money from elderly people, shoppers, a group of fifth-graders on a field trip (Teacher:"Do what they say, children."), etc.

Suddenly, a green streak of light FLIES THROUGH an open bus window. The Punks almost drop their knives.

PUNK LEADER
Oh, Jeez...

For what was once a moving green comet is now a TALL, MUSCULAR BODY -- which looks sort of like a man, except he has no hair ANYWHERE, and an oddly-shaped forehead which juts out far enough to keep his totally black eyes constantly in shadow. Oh yeah, he's also green.

Ladies and Gentlemen, meet J'onn J'onzz. Or, as he's known to the general public...

FIFTH-GRADER
Martian Manhunter!

The kids cheer and applaud. Some of the adults join in. Manhunter remains stern, standing between the two punks and their leader. His attention never leaves the three of them.

MARTIAN MANHUNTER
Drop your weapons and return the money.

FIERY PUNK
(laughing)
Oh sure, we'll do that right away for ya. Guys, check it out, it's the Man from Mars. What's a matter, Green Bean, your planet die out?

MANHUNTER
Yes. It did.

FIERY PUNK
Way I understand it, you're the only one left. But not for long.

The Fiery Punk goes for Martian Manhunter with his knife -- CONNECTS with Manhunter's green chest. SNAP!-- the blade BREAKS OFF at the handle -- doing no damage to the Martian, who simply GRABS the Punk and --

CRASH!-- JAMS his head THROUGH THE ROOF of the bus. Manhunter PUSHES the Punk's dangling legs like a pendulum--

THWAP!-- they KNOCK OUT the third Punk. Manhunter turns--

The Punk Leader is holding his knife against a woman's neck, his hand twitching nervously.

PUNK LEADER
Back off, or I'll open her up.

Manhunter just stares at him with his pitch black eyes. He knows something. He slowly walks toward the Punk.

PUNK LEADER
I'm serious, man, don't come no closer. I'll give her the shiv.

MANHUNTER
I know you don't want to kill that woman.

PUNK LEADER
I'll do it, I swear I will.

MANHUNTER
No. You won't. You know it. And now I know it.

PUNK LEADER
W-wait a minute, what does that mean, huh? What kinda garbage --

MANHUNTER
(overlapping)
-- kinda garbage talk is that.

Manhunter is now a few feet away from the Leader. He stops.

MANHUNTER
Put the knife down and let the woman go.

The Punk stares at Manhunter. Manhunter stares back. The Punk Leader DROPS the knife.

EXT. 5TH AVENUE - DAY

As Martian Manhunter, holding the three punks in one hand, reaches out into the street with his other hand, and --

SCREEEEECH!-- He yanks a POLICE CAR to a stop.

The DRIVING COP re-adjusts his glasses with an amused expression. The PASSENGER COP has spilled coffee all over himself. He is definitely not amused.

DRIVER COP
I never get used to you doing that, Manhunter. Sheesh, I gotta install air-bags in this thing.

MANHUNTER
Armed Robbery. The bus driver will verify. Sorry about the shirt.

PASSENGER COP
Great. Mars eats the big one, so you come here to play cop. Why don't you find some other planet, hotshot? I hear Neptune's free.

Manhunter pauses for a beat -- clearly stung. Then he opens the back door of the car and tosses in the Punks.

DRIVER COP
Hey, don't listen to this guy. He was turned down by the Klan. Besides, your fan club awaits.

Manhunter turns around in time to be surrounded by the fifth-graders, who strangely enough, offer him nothing but Oreo cookies -- as well as ask him to sign their Martian Manhunter bubble gum cards. We see Manhunter SMILE.

We PAN over from this scene to the METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, where we hold so we can:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM - NIGHT

INT. NEW WING - NIGHT

We PAN across Egyptian relics until we stop at a display containing the Black Helmet. David Cambell is hunched over it dressed in a tuxedo, scribbling notes in a pad and reading from an ancient book.

JANET CAMBELL steps up behind him. She is much younger than David and more beautiful than one would expect for the wife of an archaeologist. She taps him on the shoulder and he barely notices.

DAVID
Just a second. I want to finish translating this inscription.

JANET
My husband, the workaholic. Come on, smart guy. We're here to have some fun.

DAVID
You don't understand. This isn't what we thought it was. I need to...

A look from Janet stops him cold. David sighs and closes his books. He lowers a glass case over the helmet and locks it. The two of them EXIT FRAME.

We hold on the helmet for a beat -- then PAN up to the high ceiling just in time to see a piece of it lift away.

A rope drops down through the hole.

INT. MUSEUM HALL - NIGHT

We're WITH THE CAMBELLS as David locks the Wing doors -- the sounds of a PARTY in the background. The couple duck under a big red ribbon and we follow them into:

A swanky reception. Black tie, evening gowns -- red-jacketed waiters move through the crowd serving drinks and hors d'oeuvres. We FOLLOW the Cambells as they pass by:

A YOUNG WOMAN who is elbowing a WIRY GUY. We stay here.

YOUNG WOMAN
I'm telling you, this is your chance to make some BIG connections.

WIRY GUY
Right, like I'm going to go up to, uh, Maxwell Lord, and say, "Hi, Max. I know you own half the world, but would you like to buy into a time-share condo?" Give me a break.

The Wiry Guy spins, bumping into and accidently spilling his drink on the gentleman behind him.

WIRY GUY
Sorry. Send the cleaning bill to me, okay? Dave Wohlschlaeger, I work at Paradise Condos.

LORD
Maxwell Lord, I own half the world.

We get our first good look at MAXWELL LORD, a handsome man with sort of a Dick Clark youth about him. That is to say, he could be 35, he could be 50 -- you don't know. He is extremely well dressed, with an attitude as suave as his clothes.

LORD
As well as a number of jackets. Don't worry about it.

Lord grabs a full glass of champagne from a passing Waiter and hands it to Wohlschlaeger. We FOLLOW the Waiter through the crowd, through a door, and into:

INT. CATERING ROOM - ON WAITER

The Waiter walks up to a table to start re-filling his tray when a VOICE whispers to him from OFF SCREEN.

VOICE
Hey, buddy. Doesn't this job chew raw monkey lips?

The Waiter frowns at our off screen man. A HAND holding a fifty dollar bill ENTERS FRAME.

The Waiter's eyes light up.

INT. MUSEUM HALL - AT CATERING DOOR

The door booms open and a different waiter in an incredibly ill-fitting jacket bursts into the room with a tray of hors d'oeuvres. MIKE CARTER is in his late 20's, early 30's, with good looks and a devilish glint in his eye. As far as he's concerned, he's God's gift to everyone. He's also BOOSTER GOLD.

A gorgeous high society Woman walks by.

BOOSTER
(double entendre)
Can I offer you something this evening?

The Woman scoffs, stepping around him. Booster follows after her.

BOOSTER
You're wealthy, right? I know, it's none of my business. But it could be part of your business. My business, that is. My card.
(hands her his card)
Booster Gold, Super-Hero. Why wait for some caped crusader to maybe save the day, when you can OWN your very own super-hero. I can fly. I can create force fields. I can work on commission. Of course I prefer to be put on retainer, but we can work that out. Whaddya say?

The Woman rips Booster's card in half and walks away.

BOOSTER
Sure. Take your time. Think about it.

A tall, thin, slightly nerdy man reaches for one of Booster's hors d'oeuvres. Think young Jimmy Stewart, only not as cool. This is TED KORD.

BOOSTER
I wouldn't, if I were you. I had one in the kitchen. They taste like crap.

TED
I'm sorry...?

BOOSTER
You look like a sensible guy, not one to pass up the chance of a lifetime. Allow me to introduce myself.

He hands Ted one of his cards.

BOOSTER
Booster Gold, Super-Hero. Why --

TED
It says here, "Mike Carter, Sanitation Engineer."

CLOSE ON THE CARD

Sure enough, it reads "Mike Carter, Sanitation Engineer" -- except those words have been crossed out and the words "Booster Gold, Super-Hero" have been written underneath. There is a 1" by 1" box next to the name.

BACK TO SCENE

BOOSTER
Those are old cards. I'm gettin' new ones printed up. But see, look, this is me.

Booster presses his thumb on the box. A MOVING HOLOGRAM appears. It's Booster -- smiling and waving.

TED
Whoa! An animated hologram. That's incredible. I mean, I should know, I'm an inventor. Ted Kord, Kord Innovations.

BOOSTER
Ted, I like you. You carry yourself like a pro.

TED
I was working on something like this right before my company went bankrupt.

BOOSTER
Nice talkin' to ya.

Booster grabs his card back and walks away.

MAXWELL LORD

is talking to David and Janet Cambell. David doesn't look happy.

DAVID
This thing was booby trapped for a reason. I don't think it should be on public display until we find out why.

LORD
We will find out. Tomorrow.

David sighs as Ted Kord approaches.

LORD
Hey, here he is. Ted Kord, inventor extrodinaire, David Cambell, archaeologist supreme. And his wife Janet Cambell, goddess par excellence.

JANET
I'm really mortal.

DAVID
Obviously, you already know Maxwell Lord, crock-slinger unparalleled.

JANET
Now, dear. Don't bite the hand that funds you.

DAVID
You mean the hand that borrows important findings before I have a chance to analyze them?

David walks away. Janet gives Max a look, then follows David.

LORD
David is slightly concerned. There was this incident involving one of the pieces.

INT. NEW WING

Two BLACK SUITED COMMANDOS spray FOAM over security camera lenses as a third Commando shimmies down the rope, lands, and rolls open a TOOL KIT in front of the Black Helmet. They all carry automatic weapons around their shoulders.

And they're the TIBETAN MONKS from the archaeological dig.

INT. MUSEUM HALL - THE RECEPTION

Ted and Maxwell have been talking.

TED
Bankruptcy isn't so bad. Now I can catch up on all that boredom.

LORD
That's why I invited you here. One of my subsidiaries is looking for a consultant. Interested?

TED
Aw, jeez, Max. I've spent my whole life behind a desk.

Booster Gold barges in and puts his arm around Ted.

BOOSTER
Hey! If it isn't my old buddy the inventor. Tom, you didn't tell me you're good friends with Maxwell Lord.

TED
Ted.

BOOSTER
(handing Lord his card)
Booster Gold, Super-Hero.

LORD
(ignoring Booster)
If you'll excuse me, Ted, there's someone I must say hello to.

Lord walks off. Ted turns to Booster. Booster walks off the other way. Ted is left alone.

A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE

surround the DALAI LAMA, who is dressed in his traditional garb. One of these people is the Chief of Police, STANLEY MARVEL. Max Lord approaches -- the Dalai smiles. They exchange greetings in a foreign tongue.

LORD
Dalai Lama, I'm so pleased you could accept my invitation to come to New York.

DALAI
It's not every day I get the chance to speak before the United Nations -- but when I found out you were throwing a party as well -- how could I say no?

LORD
I'm surprised to see you here, Stanley.

STANLEY
Well, it's one a the perks of bein' Chief of Police. You can still do the cushy jobs if you wanna.

LORD
I imagine it isn't too difficult protecting a man whose sole purpose in life is world peace.

STANLEY
Even if somebody wanted to get to you, Mr. Lama, there's no way it could happen. Security here is air tight.

INT. NEW WING

The Commando with the tool kit picks at the lock on the glass case containing the Black Helmet. The two other Commandos keep watch, cradling their weapons.

INT. MUSEUM HALL - THE RECEPTION

Booster has found another victim.

BOOSTER
-- speeding bullets, trains, tall buildings? Kid's stuff. You don't just want super strength or super speed, you want super style. You want --

He hands out his card to his patsy, but another hand comes into frame and takes it.

TED
Booster Gold, Super-Hero.

Booster's victim quickly walks away. Ted checks out the hologram.

BOOSTER
You know something, Tim? You're crampin' my style, okay?

Booster starts to move through the crowd. Ted follows.

TED
Ted. Where did you get this? This is very advanced technology.

BOOSTER
Super-heroes have access to super stuff, alright?

TED
Yeah, but nobody has access to this. This is not even in the realm of possibility.

BOOSTER
Hey, bug... shoo. I'm a solo act, capice? I don't work with anybody.

TED
If your such a super-hero, how come I've never heard of you?

BOOSTER
(turns to Ted)
Hey, listen close.

Booster reaches for a button on his belt -- presses it. A quick shimmering SOMETHING "forces" Ted back -- away from Gold -- about five feet. Kord stumbles and falls -- looking very startled and confused.

BOOSTER
There. You've heard of me.

AT THE DOORS TO THE NEW WING

Maxwell Lord stands before the red ribbon in front of the closed doors, scissors in hand. David and Janet are nearby.

LORD
I spend a great deal of money, so believe me when I tell you: David Cambell is a good investment. I wanted something special for tonight's opening, and he came through with flying colors. Lives were lost in attaining these treasures, and to those good men I dedicate The Maxwell Lord Room of Antiquity.

SNIP -- the ribbon is cut as cameras FLASH, the audience APPLAUDS and the doors are OPENED.

BA-BA-BA-BAM!-- the three Commandos stand on the other side -- two of them BLASTING their weapons in the air while the middle one holds the Black Helmet in his hands.

SCREAMING - YELLING -- everyone hits the ground as SECURITY GUARDS and Chief Marvel scramble. Booster Gold grabs a CAMERAMAN by the scruff of the neck.

BOOSTER
Don't run away. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Booster ducks behind a pillar.

BA-BA-BA-BAM! The Commandos move out into the reception room. Chief Marvel gets a few shots off -- then dives for cover. The Commandos make their break -- head towards an exit. They are about ten feet away from the door when:

BOOSTER GOLD FLIES down next to them.

Booster Gold the super-hero, that is. Blue and gold costume, silver star in the middle of his chest, belt, goggles -- and playing it all for the cameras.

BOOSTER
I command you to STOP!

The Commandos actually do stop for a second -- mostly in amazed bemusement.

BOOSTER
Fear not, good citizens. Booster Gold is here to protect you.

The Commandos shrug -- then raise their weapons. Booster touches his belt -- the thieves fire: BA-BA-BA-BAM!

Bullets RICOCHET off of Booster's shimmering FORCE FIELD. Ted Kord and others watch in amazement as Gold remains unscathed.

BOOSTER
Lay down your weapons.

Gold presses his belt again as his force field SURROUNDS the Commandos. Booster smiles victoriously -- waving at the media.

Yet the Commandos seem nonplused. The one with the Black Helmet holds it out in front of him towards the exit. The other two line up behind him as they all step forward...

And walk THROUGH Booster's force field -- the Black Helmet pushing aside a shimmering opening.

Booster is stunned.

BOOSTER
Hey! You can't do that!

BA-BA-BA-BAM!-- the Commandos blast the door and make their escape -- while Gold is busy twisting knobs on his still-running force field belt --

BOOSTER
I knew I should have gotten the extended warranty on this thing.

-- and the Guards chase after the thieves -- TWACK -- all of them suddenly bouncing off the force field that Booster has stupidly left on.

David turns to Max, anger on his face.

DAVID
Gotta hand it to you, Max. One hell of an opening.

David stomps into the panicked crowd.

Booster Gold finally shuts off his force field and Security Guards run out the door -- leaving a very steamed Chief Marvel glaring at a sheepishly grinning Booster.

CUT TO:

A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS

being slapped on Booster Gold's wrists by Chief Marvel. We PULL BACK:

STANLEY
I've had it with you guys. You're nothing but fancy vigilantes...

Marvel starts carting Gold away just as Ted Kord steps up.

BOOSTER
I hate this century.

A curious expression crosses Ted's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE CAMBELL HOME - NIGHT

A beautiful house sits nestled between sprawling trees. A taxi pulls away leaving the Cambells and their luggage as we SUPER:

"SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS"

MRS. HARPER steps out the front door -- in her sixties with grey hair and a perpetual smile.

MRS. HARPER
You're home early.

David nods his weary head as he lugs suitcases up into the house. Janet forces a grin.

JANET
New York is bad for our health.

INT. CAMBELL LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Janet enters to find ten-year-old BILLY CAMBELL flipping through a set of baseball cards. He jumps up and gives her a hug.

JANET
Hi, Pumpkin. I got a surprise for you.

David enters the room carrying a large box overflowing with books, papers, and photographs. He gives his son a warm smile. Billy seems disappointed.

BILLY
Oh... Hi, Dad.

DAVID
Hey, Sport. How's it going?

BILLY
Okay. Bring home any new rocks?

DAVID
Yeah. I just lost one on the way back.
(playful)
And they're not rocks -- they're relics.

BILLY
Hey, I just got a new batch of cards from Jimmy DeMatteis. Wanna see?

DAVID
(sighs)
I'm sorry, I can't right now. I've got some really important work to do.

JANET
Billy, your father's had a hard couple of days. Besides, isn't it past your bedtime?

BILLY
You never want to do anything with me.

DAVID
How about tomorrow, sport?

BILLY
It's always tomorrow. And then tomorrow comes and you're gone.

DAVID
This time, I promise.

Billy's expression turns sour.

BILLY
Forget it. Next time just don't come back.

Billy runs out of the room leaving a stung David Cambell. Janet gives her husband a sympathetic look.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DAVID CAMBELL'S STUDY - NIGHT

David is studying a photograph of the Black Helmet. He flips a page in his reference book and writes down the final word of the inscription translation. He looks at it.

DAVID
Oh, my God...

As a worried expression grows on his face, a translucent GARGOYLE appears on his desk. David doesn't seem to notice it as it nods it's gruesome head.

What David does notice is that his hand has become TRANSPARENT.

Janet, dressed in a nightgown, points her head into the room just in time --

JANET
It's four A.M., honey. Why don't you come to bed?

-- to see her husband DISAPPEAR completely. She gasps. The Gargoyle, somehow invisible to her, grins and VANISHES also.

CUT TO:

INT. A CEMENT CHAMBER - NIGHT

David Cambell MATERIALIZES in the middle of the room with a SCREAM. He looks around in confusion.

Then a DARK FIGURE FLOATS DOWN from above: Large and muscular, dressed in flowing black and on his head:

The Black Helmet.

CHAOS
Greetings, David Cambell. I apologize for the theatrics. I am the Lord of Chaos.

The creature called CHAOS towers over Cambell. David catches his breath -- looks up.

CHAOS
And I'd like you to translate the inscription on the side of this helmet. Would you do that for me?

DAVID
Look, I don't know who you really are, but you're tinkering with something more evil than any of us could imagine.

CHAOS
Hmm. So, you're going to help me then?

DAVID
Crawl back to hell. I won't do it.

Chaos steps closer to Cambell -- reaches out his hand -- and the hand PASSES THROUGH David's skull. Cambell SCREAMS.

CHAOS
You just did.

Chaos pulls the hand out -- leaving no visible mark -- and turns away as David falls to the floor moaning.

CHAOS
Let it begin...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - SERIES OF SHOTS AND SCENES

We begin to see a world taking a turn for the worse:

A) SAN FRANCISCO - A POLICEMAN

leans against a street light munching on a jelly donut, nodding pleasantly to pedestrians.

Then a translucent GARGOYLE shimmies down the pole -- and no one seems to notice. The Gargoyle WHISPERS something into the Cop's ear -- and the Policeman's chipper expression turns menacing. He reaches down and unsnaps his holster.

B) NEWS FOOTAGE - NORTHERN IRELAND

British troops are shown under siege as a NEWSCASTER reports:

NEWSCASTER
...leading to a sudden rise in fighting the likes of which have not been seen in over a decade. The Prime Minister today declared...

C) BACK IN SAN FRANCISCO - AN OLD LADY

happily peeks into a shop window and -- BLAM-CRASH -- a bullet shatters the glass. She screams. PAN TO:

Our inspired Policeman. He's still munching on his donut with one hand, while he holds his revolver up with the other. The Gargoyle hangs on the pole grinning, then climbs away. BLAM -- the Cop shoots out another window, sending innocent bystanders jumping for cover. BLAM -- he starts to LAUGH.

D) NEWS FOOTAGE - EGYPT

An ANNOUNCER babbles in Egyptian over a shot of the PYRAMIDS. Planted next to the ancient monuments are huge signs advertising the site as the future home of Leona Helmsley's newest casino and resort hotel.

E) IN A CORRIDOR - A GENERAL

dressed in Army fatigues and bearing a suspicious resemblance to Muammar Gaddaffi enters his office just in time to see a BLINDING LIGHT dissipate over his large desk -- revealing a compact NUCLEAR BOMB.

The General blinks. He quickly touches the bomb as if it might bite -- then suddenly smiles. The Gargoyle APPEARS smoking a cigar on the edge of the desk. It gives the General the phone -- the man not reacting to how it got in his hand. We SUBTITLE his command:

THE GENERAL
"I need a missile."

F) NEWSCAST

SHERRY NORTH, a striking blonde newscaster, delivers her latest update with a serious tone:

SHERRY
In New York to talk before the U.N. Security Council, The Dalai Lama had some thoughts on today's crisis.

OUR SHOT BECOMES NEWS FOOTAGE of the Dalai Lama:

DALAI (ON VIDEO)
I've won two Nobel Peace Prizes, but in light of recent events, the victories seem quite hollow. It's disheartening to see my work has had little to no effect.

SHERRY
And at the Vatican today, church officials hastily tried to cover up the Pope's recent behavior in the center of Vatican square. The pope was quoted as saying, "I don't <u>just</u> do this in the woods."

We begin to PULL BACK and realize that we're watching an actual video monitor.

INT. LORD'S MONITOR ROOM - DAY

Where we KEEP PULLING BACK until we see the whole video setup: A wall of screens over a large control panel. There are news broadcasts, talk shows, Senate floor coverage, a few movie channels, and one monitor showing Wheel of Fortune -- all in front of Maxwell Lord.

MALCOM (O.S.)
Mr. Lord?

Lord's second assistant, MALCOM ROGERS, steps up next to him. Lord's eyes never leave his consoles.

LORD
Yes, Malcom.

MALCOM
I have a report you should see.

LORD
One second...

SHERRY (ON T.V.)
...unsubstantiated rumors suggest that Florida Congressman Manuel Noriega may be Playgirl's next centerfold...

LORD
The whole world is going nuts.

Lord angrily turns it off. Malcom hands him a printout.

MALCOM
The Australian plant has been forced to shut down.

LORD
MY world...

A BUZZER sounds.

STACEY (V.O.)
Janet Cambell calling.

Lord picks up the phone..

LORD
Janet?

JANET (V.O)
(very upset)
David's disappeared. I mean... right in front of my eyes. He was there one second then...

LORD
Calm down. Start from the beginning and tell me all about it.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Receptionist STACEY MAGUIRE's intercom BUZZES.

LORD (V.O.)
Stacey, tell the boys to fire up the jet.

STACEY
Right away.

LORD (V.O.)
Oh, and tell Malcom to grab my golf clubs.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. GOLF COURSE - DAY

The Washington Monument can be seen in the distance as the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES and Maxwell Lord approach the green. Secret Service are peppered around them, with two serving as the most well dressed caddies in history.

LORD
The world seems to be on fast forward, Mr. President. It's as if we're getting ten years of bad news in ten hours.

THE PRESIDENT
And you think that this helmet is behind it all?

LORD
I do, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT
Max, this is bothering you. You're rarely formal with me on the links.

LORD
I know, Nate. I'm just very concerned.

THE PRESIDENT
With the world's problems, or their repercussions on your bank account? Don't answer. That was a cheap shot. And speaking of cheap shots, you're away.

Lord goes to his ball -- lines up his putt.

LORD
Something needs to be done.

THE PRESIDENT
What can I do? I've got enough problems here at home. I'm going on prime time TV in a couple of days, I don't even know what I'm going to say.

Lord putts -- he sinks it.

LORD
I think you should bring in the big guys.

THE PRESIDENT
I can't do that, Max. I've got people crying vigilante, and the fact that some of these guys are from other planets doesn't help matters. Besides, you know how they work. They like to just show up places.

The President putts. His ball stops inches short of the hole.

THE PRESIDENT
And the one guy I could call in is a flying American flag. What if someone doesn't want our help? No, politically, my hands are tied.

He walks up to his ball and nudges it in with his foot.

LORD
According to Cambell's research, it was unearthed before -- in the early thirties. Just before Hitler rose to power.

THE PRESIDENT
Oh, come on, Max. I can't buy into that. The world is having it's problems -- but they're real ones, not fantasy.

LORD
With all due respect, Mr. President, the world is going to hell. And if you're going to pig-headedly ignore what's actually going on because you don't find it "real" enough, then at least empower me do something about it.

There is a beat. Maxwell Lord has just told off the President of the United States. Then:

THE PRESIDENT
(slight chuckle)
You always were a spark plug when you had to be. What do you want to do?

LORD
I want to form a team.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DESERT - DAY

A lone cement pill-box sits amongst the cacti and shrubbery. A door opens and a half dozen Commandos march out and form two lines. The black figure of Chaos steps out between them and walks into the desert.

OUT IN THE DESOLATION

The Lord of Chaos steps purposefully forward, heading apparently nowhere. He suddenly stops. He surveys the nothingness in front of him for a beat -- then actually rolls up his sleeves and cracks his knuckles. He pauses again, then swings back his arms and thrusts them forward.

BZZZAT -- waves of power ripple through the air and -- BOOM -- the ground in front of him EXPLODES. Huge amounts of dirt and rock fly into the air and EVAPORATE -- leaving no dust to settle from the blast.

Just a HALF-MILE WIDE HOLE that seems to go down forever. Chaos chuckles to himself.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

EXT. COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS - DAY

We are HIGH over sprawling plains. SUPER:

"NEBRASKA"

We CRANE DOWN into an open air CIRCUS ARENA. An excited CROWD is watching "THE MR. MIRACLE SHOW" -- as we continue CRANING closer to the ground. Too close.

A man steps INTO FRAME. Forty, balding -- and just over three feet high. He's OBERON with a cordless microphone:

OBERON
Ladies and gentlemen, the padlocks and handcuffs that Officer Brown is putting on Mr. Miracle are official police issue.

We PAN to see MR. MIRACLE (SCOTT FREE). He is thin, yet strong looking -- wears a flamboyant red and green costume with a green cape. He is currently ATTACHED to a modified roller coaster car. The chassis of the car has been removed and in its place is a thick vertical slab of wood. Padlocks, leather belts, chains -- everything imaginable is used to restrain him. A section of roller coaster track rises OUT OF FRAME.

OFFICER BROWN, a paunchy country cop, slams one last padlock shut and waves goofily to the crowd. Oberon steps INTO FRAME, frowns and covers his microphone.

OBERON
Alright already -- scram.

Brown shuffles away pouting. Oberon turns to the crowd.

OBERON
And to make sure Mr. Miracle remains where he is, I present his lovely assistant and wife -- Barda!

AT THE ARENA ENTRANCE

BARDA FREE, Mr. Miracle's wife, steps in. Stunningly beautiful, wide smile, muscular but still very feminine -- and exactly SEVEN feet tall.

She is carrying a three hundred pound steel ball and chain with ease. The audience APPLAUDS. Barda plops the weight down in front of Miracle's feet. Oberon helps her lock it on and WHISPERS:

OBERON
Too tight?

MR. MIRACLE
No, Oberon. It's fine.

BARDA
That's what you call it? Fine?

Only now do we see that Barda's smile is an angry grimace.

OBERON
Calm down, Barda.

BARDA
I'm just glad this is the last time. I still don't understand why you do it, Scott.

Miracle grins like an innocent little boy.

MR. MIRACLE
It makes the children happy.

They turn to the crowd. Oberon steps over to a lever.

OBERON
When I pull this lever an unstoppable sequence of events will begin. The car containing Mr. Miracle will rise to a height of forty feet...

We finally PAN and get to see the stunt ourselves. The miniature roller coaster rises steeply to a high crest --

OBERON
...At that point it will be set free and there will be no turning back...

-- then dives to the ground and levels off next to a tall pole. Slung over the pole is a rope which dangles over the track -- the other end tied off in the bleachers.

OBERON
...At over eighty miles per hour the cart will come racing down...

A short level piece of track beyond the rope is walled in on both sides by huge slabs of Plexiglass.

OBERON
...Mr. Miracle's only chance is to escape from his bindings -- and grab the dangling rope -- so he can swing over...

Two Clowns pull away a canvas cover at the end of the coaster to reveal a giant mass of FOUR FOOT LONG STEEL SPIKES -- jutting up and out to guarantee --

OBERON
...certain death!

The audience OOHS. Oberon pulls out a piece of cloth.

OBERON
All of this done -- blindfolded!

Barda shoots Oberon a shocked look as the little man covers Miracle's eyes. She hisses:

BARDA
This wasn't in the rehearsal!

MR. MIRACLE
Don't worry. I have the timing memorized.

IN THE STANDS

A BOY SCOUT watches the show. He is seated right next to the tied-off end of the rope Miracle needs to escape.

The GARGOYLE materializes beside the Scout, munching on a bag of popcorn. It tips its head over to the boy and whispers a suggestion. The Gargoyle DISAPPEARS as the Scout cracks an evil smile and pulls out a pocket knife. He starts to saw through the thick rope.

BACK AT THE SHOW

Oberon is finishing his spiel to the crowd as Barda whispers.

BARDA
I just want a normal life, a family, a little house in the country.

OBERON
Are you ready, Mr. Miracle?

MR. MIRACLE
Yes. I am.

BARDA
If you kill my husband...

OBERON
Then, let it begin!

BARDA
I'll rip your spine out.

Oberon winces just a little -- and PULLS THE LEVER.

CLACK-CLACK-CLACK -- we FOLLOW Mr. Miracle up. He remains completely still as the audience squirms.

Soon the cart is high enough so that the crowd can't directly see Mr. Miracle. That's when he snaps into action.

His shoes flip their lids -- his toes hold lock picks. From nowhere tiny hooks appear in Miracle's tightly bound hands.

SNAP-SNAP-SNAP -- his body remains still as he expertly picks the locks. As each padlock and cuff snap open, Miracle just lets it hang there.

CLACK-CLACK-CLA -- the cart reaches the top -- then --

VOOM -- Mr. Miracle races down the hill. The audience starts to MUMBLE -- to them it looks like he's nowhere near escaping. Miracle doesn't budge an inch. The crowd starts to SCREAM. Here comes the rope.

The Evil Boy Scout watches as Mr. Miracle JUMPS INTO THE AIR -- his shackles designed to slip away once the locks were opened. The crowd GASPS as he GRABS the dangling rope and --

It BREAKS.

The rest happens fast: Still blindfolded, Mr. Miracle does a tuck and roll -- spins in mid-air -- dropping towards the still racing cart -- LANDING and GRABBING on to the BACK side of the wood slab -- as he blasts towards THE SPIKES and--

KA-BAM -- they SLAM through the wood.

Mr. Miracle hangs off the back -- each three-foot spike having missed a part of his body. He's alive.

With exuberant energy he rips off his blindfold and hops over the Plexiglass wall. A stunned Barda and Oberon run up to him. The Evil Scout scowls. The audience CHEERS.

MR. MIRACLE
Wow! That was great!

A CROWD of adults and children pour out of the stands and surround Mr. Miracle. One CHILD looks up to his FATHER.

CHILD
Dad, I wanna be in the circus and be just like Mr. Miracle.

FATHER
No, son. Only freaks join the circus.

And, unfortunately, Miracle heard this. Barda sees his pained expression.

BARDA
We don't need this anymore.

He nods quietly to his wife. Barda puts her arm around him lovingly. A DARK SUITED MAN approaches.

DARK SUIT
Scott Free? I've come here representing a party with a business proposition.

Oberon steps in front of Mr. Miracle.

OBERON
Hold it. I'm the boy's manager. If you want to talk business, talk to me.

DARK SUIT
(hands him his card)
Very well, sir. I may have a job for Mr. Free that would utilize his special talents and...

Barda actually GROWLS. The Dark Suited Man's eyes bug out at the sight of a very pissed-off seven foot woman bearing down on him.

MR. MIRACLE
Honey, let the man say what he...

She picks the Man up with one hand, and with the other opens a passing EMPTY CAGE. She tosses him inside it and SLAMS it shut. It moves away, carrying it's new owner. She turns to Scott and Oberon -- quietly steaming.

BARDA
Come on. Let's go home.

They head off as Oberon pockets his new business card.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING TANK

Booster sits dejectedly next to an oblivious Bum.

BOOSTER
I'm from the future, ya know. Yup. 3024, to be exact. I was driving to work one day, and I guess I was goin' a little too fast. Poof -- hello ancient history. Don't know how it happened, but I figured, Hey, this'll be great. I was nobody in the thirty-first century, but here, I'll be a king, right? A superstar. Nope. The big goose egg once again. I'm still nobody, know what I mean?
(He raps the Bum's head)
Hello... is this Bum on?

A guard OPENS the cell door.

GUARD
Okay, Super-Hero, let's go.

Booster snaps out of his funk -- exits the tank.

BOOSTER
It's about time you lugnuts let me outta here.

GUARD
Well, we were really enjoying your company -- we didn't want to see you go. But somebody pulled some strings for you.

BOOSTER
What somebody?

Another DARK SUITED MAN appears from around a corner. He hands Booster a card.

DARK SUIT #2
Ten o'clock, tomorrow morning. There may be a job for you.

BOOSTER
Well, I don't know. I'll have to check my social calender.

DARK SUIT #2
You can always stay here.

BOOSTER
Nine-thirty too early?

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - DAY

We TILT down from the "Hollywood" sign, past Capital Records -- and for those who still don't get it we SUPER:

"LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA"

We settle outside "Jenny Larch Casting" just in time to see **BEATRIZ DECOSTA (FIRE)** slam the door. Brunette, dark-skinned, a skirt slit up to her armpits, and "ample" where it counts. Her fiery Brazilian anger makes her look all the more appealing.

She throws a script into the garbage, folds her arms, and steams.

Another woman quietly exits the agency. **TORA OLAFSDOTTER (ICE)** is a different kind of stunner. Conservative dress, ivory skin, painfully perfect features, almost white hair. Tora's quiet demeanor only makes you want to know more about what's going on inside.

FIRE
Not the right type -- ha! Look at me. You'd think I could at least get a daytime soap!

Fire spots Ice. She is flipping through her script, trying to figure out where she went wrong. Beatriz frowns.

FIRE
Did you get the part?

ICE
Um... no.

FIRE
Then why do you keep staring at that thing?

Fire grabs Tora's script and tosses it in the trash. Ice shrinks back a little.

ICE
Hey...

FIRE
And look at you. They didn't want you either, huh?

ICE
I guess not.

FIRE
Maybe you can't act. At least you could always get a job at Disneyland. Say, didn't I see you in an Ivory Snow commercial or something?

ICE
No. My name's...

Tora is interrupted by a loud COMMOTION down the block.

EXT. FIRST CALIFORNIAN BANK - DAY

A robbery is in progress. A MAN and a WOMAN stumble out of the front door carrying guns, money, and bibles. They bear an uncanny resemblance to Jim and Tammy Fay Baker. BLAM -- the man shoots.

MAN
God spoke to me! It is his will!

WOMAN
Praise the Lord!

BLAM -- the woman fires as the two of them run to their getaway car and pile in. A BANK GUARD screams after them as they SCREECH away.

BACK WITH BEATRIZ AND TORA

As the getaway car races towards them, Beatriz snarls and shoots out her hands.

VAOOOOOOOSH!-- two JETS OF GREEN FLAME blast out of her fingertips and envelop all four of the car's tires in an emerald blaze -- MELTING them instantly.

The car SCRAPES to a halt -- literally burning rubber.

Tora jumps back a bit -- nervously assessing the situation as the couple in the car scream and start opening their doors. Now TORA sticks out her hands and --

CRA-A-A-A-ACKLE!-- an actual COLD WAVE swooshes from Tora's arms -- sucking moisture out of the air and suddenly encasing the vehicle in a huge BLOCK OF ICE.

Both girls still have their hands out in front of them as they warily look at each other.

FIRE
Mutant...

ICE
Ice goddess...

FIRE
Yeah... Right.

FLOOM -- they both jump back as the bottom section of the car BLOWS OUTWARD in regular gasoline-fed flame.

The trapped couple watch helplessly as the flames build -- MELT the ice shell -- and then are put out by the newly-created splash of water.

Ignoring all this, Fire interrogates Ice.

FIRE
Just who are you, anyway?

ICE
Tora. I'm from Norway.

FIRE
Figures...

The two girls don't notice the couple in the car escaping -- until it's too late. They watch the Man and Woman stumble down the street SHRIEKING about the "devil's work."

POLICE CARS suddenly block them. The Man immediately drops to the ground in a fetal position, whimpering -- while tears stream down the Woman's face, smearing her mascara.

The girls watch all this from down the block. Ice frowns.

ICE
Wasn't that guy supposed to be in jail?

A DARK SUITED MAN steps up to them.

DARK SUIT #3
Excuse me, ladies. I have a meeting you might be interested in attending in New York.

He holds out a business card and Ice immediately smiles and reaches out for it. Fire grabs her hand.

FIRE
Hold on, Chumly, what studio are you from?

DARK SUIT
This does not involved acting.

CUT TO:

EXT. LORD INCORPORATED - DAY - ESTABLISHING

INT. LORD INCORPORATED - FOYER

Stacey sits behind a reception desk as the elevator doors open. Booster Gold steps off -- and walks up to her.

BOOSTER
You found me at last.

STACEY
Ah, Mr. Gold. Go right on in. You're expected.

BOOSTER
Thanks, toots. After Maxie and I discuss figures, I'm gonna buy you dinner.

Booster opens the door to REVEAL:

INT. LORD CORP. - WAITING ROOM

Fire, Ice, Mr. Miracle, and Oberon are all here. Mr. Miracle is in his circus outfit -- Oberon by his side. Fire is now dressed in an eye-popping green leotard, Ice in a blue and white get-up showing less skin, but plenty of curves. They're all filling out forms on clipboards.

They glance up at Booster. He stares back. Then a sneer finally replaces his look of surprise.

BOOSTER
Well, they're auditioning for my Boy Wonder already. And looking at you girls, boy do I wonder... is there gravity in this place or what? Folks, thanks for coming, but I'm sorry. I work alone.

Booster walks over to a door on the opposite side of the room -- just as Malcom pops out with another clipboard.

MALCOM
Ah, Mr. Gold. Please take a seat and fill out this form. Mr. Lord will be seeing you all shortly.

Malcom leaves -- closing the door behind him. After a beat, Booster turns around. Oberon is snickering at him.

BOOSTER
What are you so happy about? Oh, that's right, I forgot. You're not Happy, you're Dopey, aren't ya?
(Oberon grimaces)
Ah, now you're Grumpy. Heh heh.

Booster takes a seat next to Fire -- very next to her.

BOOSTER
And you must be Tasty. I'm Doc. Wanna play?

FIRE
The name's Fire.

VOOOSH!-- Fire reduces Booster's chair to ash. BAM -- he lands on his ass as Fire gets up and walks away.

BOOSTER
This chick is hot.

ICE

is biting her lip adorably as she fills out her form. Fire sits next to her.

FIRE
This is just another audition for a part we're not going to get. These other guys are pros -- granted, second rate pros, but us? We became super-heroes this morning. What are we doing here?

ICE
This Maxwell Lord paid for our airline tickets and hotel rooms, he must want us for something.

FIRE
Honey, don't be so gullible.

INT. LORD'S MONITOR ROOM - DAY

As Maxwell Lord watches his video screens and this time they show the INSIDE OF HIS WAITING ROOM. Malcom steps in.

FIRE (ON T.V.)
What they want us for I don't do for money. We got no chance.

ICE (ON T.V.)
I don't understand why you're so worried. At least you can control your powers.

MALCOM
They're all here.

Lord nods. He looks down at a pad of paper and starts writing the super-hero's names down the side.

INT. LORD CORP. - WAITING ROOM

Oberon bubbles with enthusiasm as he reads off from the form he's filling out.

OBERON
"Can you pass through objects?"
(he writes)
Very thin ones. Let's see, "Do you have the ability to fly?" Yes...

MR. MIRACLE
Oberon, I cannot fly.

OBERON
You sorta do. You fly through the air.

MR. MIRACLE
Yeah, I will when Barda throws me through the hotel window.

OBERON
Hey, don't let Barda hang you up. I can handle her.

Miracle gives Oberon a doubtful look as the main waiting room door is suddenly FLUNG open and we see:

BLUE BEETLE

hands on hips, goggles and headpiece, utility belt, well-developed muscles rippling under a shiny new blue costume. The surprise-super-hero enters the room and smiles.

BOOSTER
And who are you supposed to be?

BEETLE
I'm Blue Beetle.

BOOSTER
Uh huh. Can you fly like a beetle?

BEETLE
Um... not really.

Booster turns to the room.

BOOSTER
Can anyone here fly? 'Cause I can fly, folks, so you all might as well just leave right now.

OBERON
Take your own advice, meathead. My boy's got the job wired.

FIRE
Listen, I don't want to cut you short, oops, too late, do you guys know who you're dealing with here?

FIRE
In other words, you're nobody, like the rest of us. This bites.

BOOSTER
Oh, is that your power then? And I suppose your friend here swallows.

ICE
No, I make ice.

BOOSTER
Terrific. I'll remember you next time I'm throwin' a party. What a batch of lame-oids.

BEETLE
Wait. I got this.

Beetle pulls out a gun-like object with a large mouth and a circular ammo cartridge.

BOOSTER
Ooo, the cockroach has a gun.

Beetle points the weapon at Oberon and pulls the trigger.

VOOSH -- A dozen thin strands of rope shoot out of the mouth -- form into a tethered NET -- stop in mid-air in front of Oberon's scrambling body -- then suddenly wrap themselves around him as if they had a mind of their own.

Oberon HOWLS as Beetle releases the tether and Mr. Miracle starts helping him escape.

BOOSTER
Okay. The gun I like.

BEETLE
It's smart string. Based on the same principle as memory metal. The strands are trained to sense heat and then wrap around it.

The girls laugh as Booster slides up next to Beetle.

BOOSTER
And the chicks seem to dig it.

Beetle secretively lifts his goggles and whispers.

BEETLE
Booster -- it's me. Ted Kord. From the Met, remember?

BOOSTER
Ah jeez, the bankrupt inventor? Didn't you used to be wimpy?

BEETLE
Not anymore, thanks to my power suit. I've been working on it for a while. Now the smart string -- I just whipped that up this morning.

BOOSTER
Tell it to someone who cares, Bob.

BEETLE
That's Ted... I mean Blue Beetle.

WITH OBERON AND MR MIRACLE

as Miracle pulls the last of the smart string off Oberon.

OBERON
This Maxwell Lord guy better be paying top dollar.

MR. MIRACLE
Obe, if this job means I can contribute something to society, I'll do it for free.

Oberon's eyes bug out.

OBERON
What? Don't say that word. Just let me do the talking, okay?

FIRE AND ICE

have been talking.

FIRE
So when I turned sixteen my powers popped up, right? And my parents started showing me off to their "friends."

ICE
They must have been pretty proud.

FIRE
Proud? These so-called friends were actually doctors and psychiatrists. I fell for it every time. Hook, line, and sinker. That's when I left home.

ICE
I wanted something more, even when my people told me that if I left I could never come back.

FIRE
Right. All those Nordic gods and goddesses. Are we talking all-powerful beings here, or what?

ICE
I guess god is a relative term. Today being able to cause hurricanes or throw the occasional lightening bolt doesn't qualify one as a god.

FIRE
It'd get you on Oprah.

Oberon slips up to Ice and puts his arm around her.

OBERON
Listen, how much would it take for you girls to look for employment elsewhere?

ICE
(very nervous)
Well, uh... I don't really...

FROST starts to develop on Oberon's arm. He yanks it away from her. This does not go unnoticed by Booster.

BOOSTER
Whoa! Brrr. Talk about gettin' the cold shoulder.

INT. LORD'S MONITOR ROOM

Lord adds a final note to his pad which is now filled with "info" on each of the super-heroes.

BOOSTER (ON T.V.)
I bet this chick's never had a hot meal in her life.

LORD
Let's bring them in.

Malcom goes to a door.

INT. LORD'S MONITOR ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The super-heroes and Oberon are led in by Malcom. They stare in awe at the technology as we PAN over to a large table. At the head of the table stands Maxwell Lord -- and seated in front him:

Martian Manhunter.

BOOSTER
Oh, great. More competition. Can't we keep this within our own species?

LORD
Why don't you all have a seat and allow me to explain.

They all go for chairs. Booster stays standing. As Beetle moves by Lord, he recognizes him.

LORD
Teddy? Is that you under there?

BEETLE
You like it? It's a new me, Max.

LORD
I think there's been some sort of misunderstanding. I wanted the old you. I need a technical consultant not an insect.

BEETLE
Come on, Max. I want to get out where the action is.

BOOSTER
You? Gimme a break. So who gets the job?

LORD
Let me explain. I don't want just one of you.

Lord presses a button.

A wall panel slides away to reveal FIVE SUPER-HERO COSTUMES -- all of them identical.

LORD
I want all of you. You'll be a team. And Martian Manhunter will lead it.

Manhunter stands.

MANHUNTER
Ladies... Gentlemen...

There is a silent beat. Then:

BOOSTER
This is a crock! I work alone. If you want me, then you want only me.

LORD
I do want you, but as part of a team.

BOOSTER
Then I'm going to lead it.

FIRE
Oh no. This pork chop isn't going to be giving me orders.

MR. MIRACLE
I don't mind who's the leader, I'm ready to sign up.

OBERON
No way. Mr. Miracle is a headliner, not part of a chorus line.
(whispering to Miracle)
This team thing will really cut into our percentage.

ICE
I shouldn't even be here.

BOOSTER
None of you should be here -- 'cause I'm the one for the job.

LORD
All of you are the ones for the job. You each have something to offer each other. And I, in turn, have something to offer you.

Lord begins to circle the group. Though he addresses them all, his comments are clearly directed to them individually.

LORD
I'm giving you a chance to contribute something to society.

Mr. Miracle looks to Oberon: "How did he know?"

LORD
Lord resources will be at your disposal -- maybe to help you control your powers -- maybe to help you develop your other talents.

Ice looks surprised. Fire looks suspicious.

LORD
Being part of this team will put you in the spotlight.

Booster and Beetle exchange frowns.

LORD
This is a chance of a lifetime that I think none of you can afford to pass up.

They all stare at him in silence.

CUT TO:

INT. LORD INCORPORATED - FOYER

We're on a shot of just Stacey and her desk. Her typing is interrupted by Fire stomping INTO FRAME.

FIRE
I don't need this crap. I'm an actress. Come on, Ice.

ICE
But, Fire...

She follows Fire OUT OF FRAME. After a beat, Oberon stomps IN, ushering Mr. Miracle along.

OBERON
Don't worry. We say no now and he comes back with a better offer.

They LEAVE FRAME. A beat. Beetle slowly trudges silently ACROSS FRAME. Another beat. Then we hear a DOOR SLAM. Booster marches INTO THE SCENE, turning quickly to Stacey.

BOOSTER
Dinner's off.

And he's GONE. Stacey goes back to her typing.

INT. LORD'S MONITOR ROOM

Lord and Manhunter stand quietly in the now empty room.

MANHUNTER
Well, I think that went very well, don't you?

LORD
Remember -- humans can change their minds.

Manhunter raises a hairless eyebrow.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. THE FORUM - NIGHT

Thousands of SCREAMING FANS are watching the Los Angeles Lakers losing to the New York Knicks, 103 to 102 -- with only FIVE SECONDS left as the ball gets to MAGIC JOHNSON. 4 seconds -- 3 seconds -- the crowd chants: "Ma-gic!" "Ma-gic!" Johnson leaps -- going for the slam dunk -- 1 second -- he seems to hang in mid-air as he swings the ball down--

And Magic Johnson VANISHES -- as in disappears, gone, kaput, like he was never there -- the ball going through the hoop as the final BUZZER SOUNDS.

A lone basketball bounces where a very tall man should be.

NEWSCAST

We watch a VIDEO REPLAY of the event at the Forum.

SHERRY NORTH
...adding Magic Johnson to the list of recent disappearances. No corner of society seems to be immune -- plumbers, clergymen, housewives, teachers -- new cases filter in hourly. Up next, East Germany begins rebuilding the Berlin Wall -- and Sony purchases the Statue of Liberty.

We PULL BACK TO:

INT. THE CAMBELL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Janet is watching television. Billy comes in with his baseball cards.

BILLY
Wait'll Dad sees my new Upper Deck set.

JANET
(gently)
Billy, your father isn't going to be here tonight.

BILLY
Is he mad at me?

JANET
(covering)
No, honey. He had to rush off to a new dig.

From his expression we see that Billy still believes his dad's left because of him.

JANET
Hey, I'll take a look at those cards.

He glumly dumps the cards on Janet's lap and walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - DAY

Fire and Ice are seated at a table near the bar. Those not gawking at the two women in their costumes are watching news reports on the bar television set.

ICE
I don't understand you. First you're worried that we won't get the job, then when we do get it, you leave.

FIRE
The whole thing has a bad smell to it.

ICE
But what if this Maxwell Lord can help me control my powers?

FIRE
Hey, no one forced you to leave. Go back if you want. I'm not ready to put my life into the hand of these geeks.

ICE
You problem is you don't trust anybody.

FIRE
Hey, this is the real world, not some igloo up in Norway. By myself, I'm okay. But I can't depend on a guy who's constantly breathing down my bra-strap.

ICE
I thought you could depend on me.

Fire realizes she's hurt her new friend's feelings.

FIRE
Ice... It's just that my looks get me my jobs, and they could get seriously damaged here.

ICE
How much longer are your looks going to last?

This hits Fire close to home. Then she sees A GUY leering at her from the next table. A killer look grows on Fire's face as she raises her hand to blow the man a kiss --

A quick BURST OF FLAME just misses the startled guy's nose.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Mr. Miracle stands in between two agitated people of radically different sizes: Barda and Oberon. The hotel room television set is on in the background.

BARDA
Scott, you'd be leaving one circus just to join a whole new one.

OBERON
The guy's rich and he's offering you peanuts. Wait until I can up your price.

Barda actually snarls. She picks Oberon up by the scruff of the neck, opens a closet, hangs the little man on a hook, and SLAMS the door shut. She turns to Miracle.

BARDA
We were going to raise a family.

MR. MIRACLE
And we still can. But not if the planet self-destructs. Would you want to bring children into the world as it is now?

BARDA
You're an escape artist, not a super-hero. What makes you think you can make a difference?

MR. MIRACLE
Someone's offering me the chance -- I've got to try. This is what I've always wanted to do. To fight the good fight.

BARDA
Fine, go out in your pajamas and save the world. But you know what they'll say. They'll just call you a freak again.

This hits Miracle hard and Barda is immediately sorry she said it. He sits down on the bed and sighs while Oberon's muffled yells seep out of the closet.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIZZA TAKEOUT - DAY

Booster Gold and Blue Beetle step up to the take-out counter.

BOOSTER
The guy expects me to throw away my identity and wear his cheap little corporate costume.

BEETLE
Hey, he just wants me to invent stuff so someone else can get the credit.

BOOSTER
People know me. They recognize me as Booster Gold.
(to Vendor)
One pepperoni.

BEETLE
At least you get recognition. Does anyone remember who designed the Mercury space craft? No. All they remember are the astronauts.

The PIZZA VENDOR hands over a slice of pizza.

PIZZA VENDOR
Buck fifty.

BOOSTER
You want me to pay for this?

PIZZA VENDOR
That was my plan.

BOOSTER
You don't charge cops.

PIZZA VENDOR
You're not a cop.

BOOSTER
Yeah, I'm better than a cop.

BEETLE
He's Booster Gold.

PIZZA VENDOR
Congratulations. Buck fifty.

BOOSTER
I don't believe this...

BEETLE
Booster, here, I got it.

Beetle hands two bills to the Vendor.

BOOSTER
Don't spend it all in one place. Thanks, Beetle.

Booster moves away as the vendor returns with the change.

BEETLE
Keep it. He called me Beetle.

He catches up with Booster. We FOLLOW them down the sidewalk.

BOOSTER
There's no respect for authority anymore. I'll never get used to this city.

BEETLE
Just where are you from, anyway?

BOOSTER
Can you keep a secret?

BEETLE
Sure.

BOOSTER
I'm from the future. 3024, to be exact.

BEETLE
Whoa, whoa, whoa... Did you just say the future?

BOOSTER
Shshsh. Pipe down. It was a freak accident, alright. But, as you can see, I've put it to excellent use.

BEETLE
Wow. The future. The possibilities with this are staggering. I mean, with my brains and your knowledge of things to come...

They are suddenly distracted by a large crowd staring into a store window. An array of television sets, all tuned to the same channel, show The President of the United States.

BOOSTER
Hey, doesn't that guy host a game show or something?

The President's voice comes through an outside speaker and we INTERCUT his speech with REACTION SHOTS of our super-heroes: Miracle and company in the HOTEL ROOM -- Fire and Ice in the BAR -- Booster and Beetle on the SIDEWALK:

THE PRESIDENT (ON T.V.)
About one hour ago, The Soviet Union informed us that President Mikhail Gorbachev is no longer in office. They then broke off all communications with the outside world. NATO forces have been put on full alert. Now, more than ever, Americans need to pull together, to work as a team -- like we have in the past. For only together, as one nation, is there any possibility....

Every television suddenly turns to STATIC. OVER the static the helmeted head of CHAOS APPEARS.

CHAOS (ON T.V.)
There is no possibility. The end is coming. And you are helpless to prevent it.

The televisions pop back to THE PRESIDENT, confused and disoriented -- speaking OFF CAMERA.

THE PRESIDENT (ON T.V.)
...re we on? What the hell was that? Get me back to...

The Presidential Seal blinks on, cutting him off.

And an amazing thing descends upon the streets of New York -- SILENCE. No one speaks, cars don't honk, nobody hails a cab. Booster Gold and Blue Beetle look at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. LORD'S OFFICE - DAY

Lord, Martian Manhunter, and Malcom are interrupted by a strong KNOCK at the door. Lord opens it to see:

Booster Gold standing in the threshold -- along with ALL the rest of our super-hero gang (and the ever-present Oberon).

BOOSTER
Two conditions. One: Blue Beetle is part of it. Two: We keep our own costumes.

Lord thinks for about two seconds. Then:

LORD
Deal. Come on in.

Everyone piles into the room. Lord motions to Malcom, who reaches into a drawer and pulls out a camera.

LORD
One quick picture, then we'll get down to business.

Malcom tries to get them together for a group shot. Everyone immediately starts jockeying for prime position -- Booster practically wrestling people to the ground to stay in front.

FIRE
So what are we going to call this rat pack?

BEETLE
How about The Mighty Men?

FIRE
Hey -- watch the gender.

BOOSTER
Simple. Booster Gold and his Hit Squad.

MR. MIRACLE
Isn't that a little long?.

LORD
I already have the name.

Everyone looks at Lord. Malcom is set for his picture.

LORD
The Justice League of America.

FLASH!-- our shot turns into a FREEZE FRAME of the newly-formed team.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A fairly Gothic-looking five-story building. Workmen are placing a giant "A" after "J L" above the front doors.

INT. JLA HQ - HALLWAY - DAY

Maxwell Lord is giving the League the grand tour. Manhunter is not with them. Oberon is.

LORD
And this is where your living quarters will be.

Beetle is checking out the new SPONSOR PATCHES on Boosters costume ("STP," "Delta Airlines," "AT&T," etc,).

BEETLE
When did you turn into a walking billboard?

BOOSTER
Hey, wise up, pal. This is one guy who's not going bankrupt.

OBERON
I think it degrades the image of the League.

BOOSTER
Yeah, just 'cause you didn't think of it first -- what are you doing here, anyway?

MR. MIRACLE
It's part of my arrangement with Mr. Lord. Oberon can stay here.

BOOSTER
Oh, that'll come in handy.

INT. JLA HQ - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Monitors, computers, high-tech machinery. A round oak table sits dead center. Basically, a smaller version of NORAD crossed with the War Room from Dr. Strangelove. And it's only half-finished.

LORD
And this is the Control Room.

BEETLE
Wow. More T.V's. You must have an amazingly high cable bill.

LORD
Actually, I own the satellites.
(to the group)
As you can see, we're still working on it, but when it's completed, this room will be the hub of JLA Headquarters. Any questions?

Mr. Miracle raises his hand. Booster butts in:

BOOSTER
Yeah, when can we re-take that group photo? You can hardly see me in it.

LORD
Mr. Miracle.

MR. MIRACLE
(lowering his hand)
Do you need help with the construction, or anything else? I'd be happy to assist in any way.

BOOSTER
Maybe we could draw up a chore wheel.

OBERON
Maybe you could just shut up.

BOOSTER
Did my knees just speak?!?

BEETLE
Come on, Booster. Mr. Miracle was just trying show some team spirit.

BOOSTER
And speaking of team spirit, where, exactly, is our illustrious "leader?"

INT. JLA HQ - SUPERGYM - DAY

We START ON Martian Manhunter -- slightly straining as he yanks on two pulleys -- first with his right arm, then his left. WE PULL BACK:

And what we thought was a Nautilus machine is, in fact, two thick cables entering the wall above two closed ELEVATOR DOORS. As Manhunter pulls each cable, we see the old-fashioned floor pointers above the elevators move left and right, first floor to fifth floor.

This room is a gym for Super-Heroes. It has your standard gym fare: weights, cycles, ropes, -- and your not-so-standard: the elevator machine, an air tube for flying maneuvers, a large safe, a fire-retardant exercise bench.

The League and Lord enter. Manhunter stops. The elevators land with a ground-shaking THUD.

MANHUNTER
Ladies. Gentlemen.

LORD
As you can see, this is not your ordinary gym. We've added a few extra things like --

BOOSTER
A jacuzzi!

Booster runs over to the jacuzzi. The others, taking Booster's lead, start to wander.

LORD
Yes, a jacuzzi, as well as a fire-proof section and a flying chamber. If there's anything you need, just tell me, I'll build it for you.

ICE

is standing by herself watching Martian Manhunter across the room. Beetle steps up to her.

BEETLE
He's the last Martian alive. His planet was wiped out by a plague, but he managed to escape to Earth. Now he's stranded here. No family, just a world of aliens.

ICE
I know how he feels.

Beetle offers his hand.

BEETLE
Hi, I'm Blue Beetle.

FIRE

is checking out her fire-proof section of the gym when Booster approaches.

BOOSTER
You know, I was watching you, and the words "bench press" just popped into my head.

Fire sighs -- walks away.

MR. MIRACLE

Gets INTO the large safe, but not before asking Lord --

MR. MIRACLE
So. When do we find out our first assignment?

He slams the door shut -- locking himself in.

LORD
Right now, actually.

BOOSTER
Alright! Let's bust some heads.

LORD
Last week, an ancient relic was stolen from the Metropolitan Museum.

BEETLE
The night of your party.
(big smile)
In fact, wasn't that the night that Booster really blew it.

BOOSTER
Look, Mr. Bankrupt Company, somehow they were able to walk through my force field, okay?

LORD
The black helmet. It gave them special powers. And now someone seems to be controlling that power. Someone who interrupted twenty-six TV channels yesterday.

MR. MIRACLE
Do we know who that someone is?

Fire and Ice look at Mr. Miracle with disbelief. How did he get out of that safe so quickly? Mr. Miracle responds by wiggling his fingers.

LORD
No.

BEETLE
Do we know <u>where</u> that someone is?

LORD
No.

BOOSTER
Do we know squat?

MANHUNTER
What about the archaeologist who found it?

LORD
David Cambell. He's missing as well.

FIRE
A lot of people seem to be disappearing lately.

LORD
I want you to go to Springfield Illinois and talk to David's wife, Janet. Find out what she knows about the helmet, and about David's disappearance.

BOOSTER
Swell. We're not gonna bust any heads, no, we're gonna interview some broad. This is more like the Bush League of America.

Lord pulls Manhunter aside.

LORD
May we speak privately.

Lord and Manhunter leave the SuperGym.

INT. JLA HQ - HALLWAY

Lord and Manhunter stand outside of the SuperGym door.

LORD
I have to take the Dalai Lama to the U.N., so I'll make this brief. When you get to Springfield, have the rest of the group sift through the dig records. I want you to talk to Janet Cambell personally.

Manhunter takes this in for a beat.

LORD
Don't act on any information until you contact me.

MANHUNTER
You don't trust the others.

LORD
I didn't say that.

MANHUNTER
No. You didn't.

LORD
(after a beat)
My thoughts are my business. Please respect my privacy and keep them that way.

Lord walks away. Manhunter watches him go -- then opens the SuperGym door:

INT. JLA HQ - SUPERGYM

A full-fledged BATTLE is in progress. Fire is shooting flames, Oberon has Booster by the head, with Mr. Miracle pulling on Oberon's legs. Ice and Beetle watch as Booster swings out at Fire.

Manhunter sighs. He walks over to the group.

MANHUNTER
STOP. THIS. NOW.

They all stop. This guy's not the leader for nothin'.

MANHUNTER
We're going to Springfield, Illinois to talk to Janet Cambell.

BOOSTER
Fine. I'll just fly down there right now, okay? Bye, everybody.

FIRE
And what are the rest of us supposed to do?

BOOSTER
Oh that's right, you can't fly. Jeez, that's not very "super" for a hero, is it?

MANHUNTER
Booster, STOP IT. Now, we are all going to Springfield.

BOOSTER
And how do you propose to do that, oh Green One. We gonna take the bus?

BEETLE
Excuse me. We don't have to take the bus.

CUT TO;

EXT. MANHATTAN - FLYING - DAY

We're FLYING through skyscrapers as something big and blue WHOOSHES INTO FRAME.

It's a bird. It's a plane. It's... a BUG. All blue, about the size of a very fat Winnabego, round and smooth, two bulbous canopies, and with six insect-like legs as landing gear. There are two turbine exhausts in the back -- and we get a glimpse of four jet ports on the bottom as The Bug ZOOMS up and OUT OF FRAME.

INT. THE BUG - FLYING - DAY

Crammed with equipment, lockers, monitors, radar devices. The Justice League mulls about in fascination as a very proud Blue Beetle mans the controls.

BEETLE
...a complete array of sensing instruments, two on-board super computers, and a complete remote monitoring system that's VHS, Beta, and eight millimeter compatible. The Bug represents all that I have left from Kord Innovations.

BOOSTER
Now let me get this straight. You built this thing before you became the Beetle?

BEETLE
Sure. Years ago. I patterned my super-hero identity after it.

BOOSTER
So you named yourself after a plane?

BEETLE
Uh... yeah. Only seemed natural.

BOOSTER
Beetle, you're one heck of a nerd.

Ice lays a sympathetic hand on Beetle's shoulder.

ICE
But a very clever one.

BOOSTER
Oh, definitely. Good job, Beetle. Real cool.

Booster backpedals for the sake of scamming while Beetle smiles at the attention.

MANHUNTER
How fast can we get to Springfield?

BEETLE
How does Mach 3 grab you?

Beetle beams and reaches for a switch.

EXT. SKY - DAY

With a THUNK and a WHIR The Bug's "shell" cracks open, spreading outward like a ladybug's wings and -- KA-VOOM!-- rips through the clouds with a SONIC BLAST.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR CONCERT HALL - DAY

A full ORCHESTRAL SYMPHONY is finishing a rousing classical piece for the crowd. The CONDUCTOR whips his arms up high, pauses, then brings them down for the final crescendo and--

Everybody on stage DISAPPEARS. The orchestra, their instruments and the conductor are just suddenly not there. Stray pages of sheet music float to the ground.

The audience stares in confused silence -- then starts up a lame round of APPLAUSE.

CUT TO:

INT. CAMBELL LIVING ROOM - DAY

Billy is flipping through his baseball cards when a shattering BOOM breaks the silence. He runs to the window as a WHOOSHING dissipates outside. An excited smile grows on his face.

BILLY
Whoa! Mom! Hey, Mom!

EXT. CAMBELL BACK YARD - DAY

The Bug opens, the JLA stumble out -- all of them except Manhunter and Beetle holding onto their necks and moaning.

BOOSTER
Jeez, Beetle. I could have whiplash for life.

FIRE
Warn us next time you slam on the brakes.

BEETLE
I'm sorry. I guess I got a little carried away. I should've had you strap in.

Janet Cambell and her excited son come out the back door.

BILLY
Look, it's Martian Manhunter and... and...
(frowns)
Who are the rest of these guys?

MR. MIRACLE
We're the Justice League of America.

BILLY
The what...? I don't get it. Where are the big guys?

BOOSTER
What's not to get, kid? We're super-heroes, okay?

MANHUNTER
Why don't we all go inside.

JANET
Max called ahead. I have everything laid out for you.

Everybody starts to go in. Manhunter and Janet are last and he stops her.

MANHUNTER
I need to talk to you about your husband... privately.

INT. CAMBELL LIVING ROOM

The super-heros look pretty out of place in this quaint environment. Booster, Beetle and Miracle are examining maps and journals from the dig.

Billy is completely awe-struck.

BILLY
I can't believe it. Wait'll the guys at school hear about this.

Booster tears a page out of a journal and grabs a pen.

BOOSTER
Here, I'll give you my autograph.

BILLY
I met Martian Manhunter's friends!

Booster crumples the paper and throws it at Billy, but Mr. Miracle catches it in the air. Booster sneers and walks over to a window. He sees Manhunter and Janet in the yard.

BILLY
So why's Manhunter outside talking to my mom?

BOOSTER
That's a good question.

BILLY
Is my dad in trouble?

BEETLE
No, no. We just need to find out some archaeology stuff.

Beetle shoots Miracle a worried look. Miracle sets down a map and finds a box of baseball cards.

MR. MIRACLE
Whoa, hey. '63 Dodgers!

BILLY
Yeah, that's my favorite set. Are you into baseball cards?

MR. MIRACLE
Just a little.

Billy excitedly opens the box.

EXT. NELSON BACK YARD - DAY

Manhunter speaks quietly to Janet.

JANET
That night... he wouldn't come to bed until he had translated an inscription from the helmet.

MANHUNTER
What did it say?

JANET
I don't know. But whatever it was it scared him -- a lot. His notes say something about unleashing chaos in the world.

MANHUNTER
It would seem that that has already occurred.

JANET
Yes. And he never made it to bed.

FIRE AND ICE

are going through a stack of 8 by 10 photos. They find a shot of the Black Helmet.

ICE
How could this have killed all those people?

FIRE
I guess this is what they'd call drop dead "ugly." So what do you think of this pack of wolves?

ICE
They're okay. It's nice to have a group of people that I can relate to for a change.

FIRE
Ice, Ice, Ice. I have so much to teach you.

Ice sighs and walks over to:

BILLY AND THE REST

Billy and Mr. Miracle play trivia with the kid's baseball cards.

MR. MIRACLE
Sandy Koufax, best left-handed pitcher in the game. In 1963 he was 25 and 5 with 306 strikeouts -- E.R.A.: 1.88.

BILLY
(checking the card)
Wow, right again. My dad never does this stuff with me.

BEETLE
I'm sure he would if you asked.

BILLY
Aw, he never has time for me.

ICE
I never get to see my dad, but that doesn't mean we don't love each other.

BILLY
Yeah, I guess.

Ice pulls a baseball card out of the box.

BILLY
No wait, hold them by the edges. Dad says they last longer that way.

MR. MIRACLE
(smirks)
I thought your dad never did this stuff with you.

BILLY
Well, sometimes. Hey, wait here. I gotta show you my 3-D cards.

Billy runs out of the room as the everyone else breathes a sigh of relief. Everyone except Booster.

BOOSTER
Oh, joy. The 3-D cards.

MR. MIRACLE
Are all people from the future as obnoxious as you?

BOOSTER
(glares at Beetle)
Well, thanks a lot, Beetle. Take out a full-page ad, why don't ya.

BEETLE
What? I'm sorry. You're from the future. That's just too cool.

INT. BACK HALLWAY

Manhunter and Janet are just coming in from the back yard.

MANHUNTER
Thank you for your help, Mrs. Cambell. The more we know about the helmet the better our chances of finding your husband.

JANET
Okay. But please don't talk about it inside. Billy doesn't know that his father is missing.

Manhunter nods as they head for the living room and we TILT UP TO:

THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

where Billy Cambell, baseball cards in hand, eavesdrops with a confused look on his face. He turns back upstairs.

EXT. CAMBELL BACK YARD

The League heads for The Bug as Booster sneers at Manhunter.

BOOSTER
So, did we have a nice little chat with the missus -- sir?

MANHUNTER
We should go the dig site and talk to the local workers.

BOOSTER
I'm sorry, "we?" Did I hear the word "we?" I thought "we" were just your entourage.

MANHUNTER
I think our next stop is Tibet.

BEETLE
If we're going to Tibet, then we have to stop in Chicago first.

FIRE
Why?

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO AM/PM MINI-MART - DAY

Where The Bug takes up an entire service lane as Beetle fills it up with gasoline. The pump reads sixty-five gallons -- and counting. Fire steps up to him.

FIRE
Couldn't we have done this in Springfield?

BEETLE
No way. You never want to buy gas in the country. They always jack up the prices.

MR. MIRACLE
I didn't realize The Bug took unleaded.

BEETLE
Super unleaded. I built in a processor that converts it to jet fuel. A real cost saver.

Martian Manhunter emerges from the Mini-Mart with three packages of Oreos in his arms, eating from a fourth.

MANHUNTER
The Oreo is one of Earth's finest creations. Just the proper amount of creamy filling delicately nestled between two chocolatey cookies with just the right amount of crunch. It's godlike.

ICE
What about Oreo Double Stuff?

MANHUNTER
A travesty. A shameless marketing ploy that destroys the understated elegance that is Oreo.

A large BUS emblazoned with the Chicago Cubs logo SCREECHES to a halt. The doors open and a GARGOYLE steps out, unnoticed by everyone. It points to the AM/PM then DISAPPEARS.

Suddenly, the actual CHICAGO CUBS pile out, swinging baseball bats and screaming. They head for a Coke Machine and start pummeling it.

VARIOUS CUBS
I hate New Coke! It's too sweet! Why did you change the formula?!?

They continue bashing as Manhunter frowns. Booster sticks his head out of the Bug.

BOOSTER
Can we can the noise out here, I'm tryin' to grab some sleep.

MR. MIRACLE
We should do something about this.

ICE
I don't know, there are nine of them, and they have bats.

BOOSTER
Hey, no problem. It's the Cubs. Everybody beats these guys.

Convinced by Booster and eager to be a super-hero, Beetle marches toward the enraged team, unnoticed by the others.

FIRE
I don't want to be shooting flames around a gas station.

BOOSTER
You don't need your powers. It's the Cubs. These guys haven't won in eleven hundred years.

MR. MIRACLE
(disappointed)
Never?

MANHUNTER
They're obviously poor losers.

FIRE
Don't worry, Beetle's handling it.

They all turn. Sure enough, Beetle has stepped into the center of the action.

BEETLE
Come on, boys. Let's stop this before it gets ugly.

A Cub swings his bat at Beetle's midsection and -- CRACK -- in snaps in half when it hits his power suit. Beetle is ecstatic.

BEETLE
Alright! It works!

A flying baseball suddenly THWACKS against his head. Beetle staggers away.

Manhunter moves as the Cubs yank the Coke Machine from the wall and start cramming it into their bus.

The Martian grabs the rear fender -- SCREEE -- rubber burns on pavement, but the bus is going nowhere. He's holding it back with brute strength. He looks over:

At the pumps, Ice nervously moves to help -- and just ends up tripping over the gas hose, pulling the nozzle out of The Bug and sending gas spraying. She falls -- but is caught by Mr. Miracle.

Booster pushes Miracle and Ice aside with a "let me handle this" look. He then slips and falls in the gas puddle -- knocking Miracle and Ice to the ground in the process.

Manhunter watches the League fumble about -- then the bus fender comes off in his hands. The Cubs peel away.

Fire stands off to the side with her arms folded, nodding.

FIRE
Cubs are lookin' good this year.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUG

Everyone is sitting in The Bug nursing their bruises.

MR. MIRACLE
Hey gang, I'm sure next time we'll all do much better.

Everyone does a slow burn in Miracle's direction.

Then a RED LIGHT starts blinking. Beetle punches a button. The voice of Maxwell Lord squawks through a speaker -- and he's WHISPERING.

LORD (V.O.)
Beetle. We have an emergency. How quickly can you get back to New York?

BEETLE
How does Mach 4 grab you?

Everybody scrambles to snap on their safety belts.

LORD (V.O)
The faster the better. There's a crisis at the United Nations that requires the League.

BOOSTER
Sure, forget about the helmet. Max wants us in New York. Would you like us to pick up your laundry while we're at it?

MANHUNTER
What kind of crisis?

CUT TO:

INT. U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL- DAY

Standing at the dais with an ARMED GOON on each side of him is KEEN LOUBE, terrorist. He speaks to the surprised Council. Maxwell Lord and the Dalai sit nearby.

LOUBE
I suggest you all listen very carefully. Because if anyone so much as shifts the wrong way, this entire room will be blown to pieces.

He rips open his shirt. A DISK-SHAPED DEVICE, with a blinking red light is attached to his chest.

A bomb.

END OF ACT III

ACT IV

A TELEVISION SCREEN - NEWSCAST

SHERRY NORTH
To repeat: One hour ago, a group of armed terrorists took the United Nations Security Council hostage. There have not been any demands yet. This man appears to be the leader.

A video freeze frame of Loube and his bomb appears.

SHERRY
Perhaps the strangest twist of the afternoon is the explosive device which the terrorist leader has apparently grafted onto his chest -- set to explode should it be removed or should his heart stop beating.

We PULL BACK from the television screen to REVEAL:

INT. BUG - DAY

The JLA is watching the news as they strap tiny TUBES, a lens on each end, to their shoulders and put little HEARING AIDS in their ears. The U.N. can be seen approaching in the distance.

BEETLE
A pace-maker bomb...

FIRE
Beetle, this camera of yours ruins the look of my costume.

MR. MIRACLE
You have to wear the ViewCam, and the earpiece, too. It's important that we're able to communicate with each other, as well as the Bug.

Martian Manhunter spots something on the floor of the Bug. It's a BASEBALL CARD. He's about to pick it up when:

MAX (V.O.)
Justice League...

They turn the television down to hear Max's whispers.

BEETLE
Are you okay, Max?

INT. U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

Maxwell Lord is seated next to the Dalai Lama, "on stage" as it were -- very near the dais where Loube is still addressing the Council. Lord whispers into his pen.

MAX
Nobody's been hurt yet. They have AK-47's. I'm sure someone is posted just outside the room, but beyond that I -- hang on.

One of the Goons walks over to Lord. He takes the pen away from him. Looks at it. Elbows Lord in the head.

INT. BUG

Static comes over the speaker -- then nothing.

BEETLE
Transmitter went dead.

They look at each other for a beat.

MANHUNTER
Alright, here's what we do...

BOOSTER
We take 'em out. Let's go!

MANHUNTER
Booster, it would be better if we had a plan.

BOOSTER
I got a plan. We bust some heads.

MR. MIRACLE
Oh, good plan.

MANHUNTER
Quiet. Beetle, you stay here and monitor communications. Booster, you carry Mr. Miracle, Fire and Ice up the side of the buildi--

FIRE
Whoa, there's no way I'm letting this turkey carry me anyplace.

BOOSTER
Why can't we just smash through the front?

BEETLE
I don't wanna be stuck here in the Bug...

MANHUNTER
JUST DO IT. You people are unbelievable. This isn't a gas station. Lives are at stake. Now are we or are we not a team?

MIRACLE
Of course we are.

The others nod in serious agreement.

MANHUNTER
Then let's get to work.

EXT. SIDE OF U.N. - FLYING - DAY

Booster carries Mr. Miracle as they fly up the side of the building. Miracle gestures -- they stop at the 12TH FLOOR WINDOW. As they hang there, Miracle examines the glass.

BOOSTER
Can you do it?

Mr. Miracle removes his right glove and drapes it over his elbow. He removes his left glove -- drapes it over the same elbow. He looks at Booster -- wiggles his fingers--

CRASH!-- he breaks the window with his now padded elbow.

BOOSTER
Well I coulda done that.

MR. MIRACLE
Yes. But I thought of it first.

INT. BUG - DAY

Beetle is labeling his monitors with the names of each of the League when Mr. Miracle's voice breaks in.

MR. MIRACLE (V.O.)
Okay, Beetle, I'm in the building. What next?

BEETLE
Don't ask me. I'm too busy picking my nose.

MANHUNTER (V.O)
Miracle -- stand by while the others get into position.

The "Mr. Miracle" monitor shows a hallway with the words "Front View" on the bottom. Beetle hits a button -- the image changes to "Back View."

EXT. ON THE GROUND

Booster lands next to Fire and Ice. He approaches Fire with his arms outstretched and an evil grin.

BOOSTER
Next.

FIRE
Forget it. Not with that face. Uh uh. No way.

BOOSTER
You have to trust me sometime, babe.

FIRE
Here. That's her department.

Fire pushes Ice toward Booster. She readily gets into his arms, though she is hesitant about her mission.

ICE
I don't know, Booster. Maybe you should take me back to the Bug.

BOOSTER
What's a matter, Ice. Gettin' cold feet? Heh heh, I crack myself up.

Booster carries Ice up, up, and away.

INT. U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

Loube is still preaching to his audience.

LOUBE
Famine, poverty, disease reign in abundance on this planet, and you sit there smug and indifferent doing nothing.

The Dalai Lama attends to Maxwell's bruise.

DALAI
This man is clearly insane. The sorry thing is, much of what he is saying is true.

LORD
(small chuckle)
Only you could find a good side to this lunatic.

INT. 12TH FLOOR HALLWAY

Ice talks to Mr. Miracle.

ICE
He didn't lay a hand on me. He flew me up here like a gentleman.

Fire enters through the broken window. Her costume is completely disheveled, her hair a mess. She's obviously been mauled. She walks up to Ice.

FIRE
This trust thing may work with you, but if I hadn't a been twelve stories up in the air, that guy would've been toast.

She huffs away.

EXT. FRONT OF U.N

The police are holding back the gathered crowd. Martian Manhunter is speaking with Chief Marvel.

MANHUNTER
That's my plan. May we count on your complete cooperation?

STANLEY
Ordinarily, no. I realize Super-Heroes are a fact of life, but that doesn't mean I gotta like 'em. However, you are Max's group, and I trust him. I'll give you twenty minutes.

MANHUNTER
If all goes well, we should have fifteen to spare.

Booster shows up, waving to his public.

BOOSTER
Okay, green guy, let's do it. Hey, Chief.

STANLEY
Oh no. You didn't tell me this bozo was part of your team.

BOOSTER
See? I told ya. No one can see me in that group photo.

MANHUNTER
Don't worry, sir. Bozo is going to stay right here.

BOOSTER
What?!?

MANHUNTER
Your force field will protect the crowd in case the terrorist at the entrance starts shooting.

Booster whines and turns his head away. He sees TV cameras and reporters arriving.

BOOSTER
Aah... Okay. I'll stay here.

Manhunter leans in close.

MANHUNTER
And don't say anything to the press.

Booster opens his mouth to speak.

MANHUNTER
No, I will not stuff it there.

BOOSTER
(surprised and annoyed)
What're you, psychic?

MANHUNTER
Somewhat.

Manhunter flies away.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR

Fire, Ice, and Mr. Miracle emerge from the stairway.

FIRE
Alright, we're on the main floor.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
You three fan out. If you see the enemy, stay on him, but wait for my attack order.

They split up.

EXT. U.N. ROOF

There's one terrorist up here -- using his walkie-talkie.

ROOF TERRORIST
Checkpoint two, all clear.

Martian Manhunter's head peeks up from over the top of the roof -- almost directly in the bad guy's sight.

Quickly, his head ducks down -- then pops up again on the OTHER SIDE of the roof -- directly BEHIND the terrorist.

INT. BUG

Beetle at the console pushing buttons, checking views.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
I'm in position, Beetle. How are the others doing?

BEETLE
Fire's spotted one and is waiting. Mr. Miracle has two at the assembly room door. Ice is around the corner from one, and there's still a man at the main entrance. How you doing Booster?

EXT. FRONT OF U.N. - BOOSTER

seethes as he just stands in front of the crowd -- protecting them with his force field.

BOOSTER
Oh, I'm just Jim Dandy.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - ICE

peers around a corner -- sees a terrorist with a gun. She ducks back -- nervous.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
Alright. On my go.... NOW!

Ice hesitates -- then JUMPS around the corner -- SHOOTING ICE down the hall.

Except her man ISN'T THERE.

INT. U.N. - OUTSIDE ASSEMBLY ROOM

Two Terrorists stand guard -- backs to the door. Suddenly a SILVER DOLLAR rolls by them RIGHT TO LEFT -- wobbles -- stops.

They look at each other. One goes to the right to see where the coin came from, the other can't resist picking the dollar up. As he grabs the coin --

THWAP!-- Mr. Miracle's foot (How'd he get over here?) sends the thug flying backwards. He lands -- dazed.

Miracle runs toward the other thug, who whirls around -- raising his weapon --

Mr. Miracle JUMPS -- up and OVER the thug -- SPINNING like a Ninja warrior -- and lands behind him.

THWACK!-- another Terrorist bites the dust.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - FIRE

comes out from hiding -- facing her terrorist head on.

FIRE
Freeze! Or your burned.

Fire holds her thumb and index finger out like a gun. The terrorist looks at her -- Is this woman kidding? -- he raises his weapon to shoot --

WHOOSH!-- green flame spits from her "gun" -- knocking his rifle out of his hands. It hits the floor -- HALF-MELTED.

Fire smugly blows across the top of her finger.

The Terrorist BOLTS through an open door. Oops. Fire runs to the door -- it slams -- LOCKED. She doesn't even hesitate -- FRYING the door -- reducing it to ASH.

INT. BUG

We start on Fire's monitor screen and PULL BACK as voices CHATTER away over the radio.

BEETLE
Fire, try going to the left.

MR. MIRACLE (V.O.)
I've got my guys, Beetle. Tell me where Fire is. I can help.

FIRE (V.O.)
Yeah, Beetle, where am I?

BEETLE
I don't know. I think you're behind and to the right of Mr. Miracle, but it's hard to tell. Try turning into... that hall.

We continue to PULL BACK -- revealing BILLY CAMBELL peeking out from a storage locker -- watching in fascination.

INT. U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

Loube is still at it, as his Goon uses his walkie-talkie.

LOUBE GOON
Checkpoint number two?
(no response)
Checkpoint two, do you read?

EXT. U.N. ROOF

We PULL BACK from the walkie-talkie lying on the ground, see the Roof Goon lying next to it, dazed -- his machine gun beside him.

The gun barrel is tied in a knot.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - ICE

cautiously moves through the hallway, looking for her guy -- trying to concentrate over the RADIO CHATTER in her ear.

FIRE (V.O.)
Beetle, I feel lost. Are you sure this is the right direction?

BEETLE (V.O.)
Pretty sure, I think. Maybe if you
-- ICE, BEHIND YOU!

Ice spins around and shoots -- CRA-A-A-A-CLE! Mr. Miracle is now completely encased in Ice.

ICE
Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry... I'm so stupid. I'm a complete washout.

BEETLE (V.O.)
Ice, no, it was my fault.

Fire rounds the corner Mr. Miracle just came from, holding her Goon -- finger placed against his side.

FIRE
Hey, lookie what I found.

Fire's face changes. At the other end of the hall Ice's THUG stands -- his gun aimed.

FIRE
Down!

Ice dives -- Fire throws herself and her guy down. BA-BA-BAM -- the Thug's bullets riddle the wall. Mr. Miracle remains well protected in his ice cocoon.

The Thug takes off around the corner. A beat. Then he comes FLYING BACK -- SMASHING into the wall -- dazed.

Martian Manhunter comes round the corner.

By the time he reaches Ice et al, Fire has "melted" Mr. Miracle free.

MR. MIRACLE
I could've escaped from that.

FIRE
You're welcome.

EXT. FRONT OF U.N.

Booster stews as he hears things like "We did it" and "I got my guy" over his EARPIECE. He looks over: The Entrance Terrorist is using his walkie-talkie. The Terrorist nods -- then goes into the building.

BOOSTER
Hey guys, my terrorist just went in. I'm going after him.

INT. HALL

The gang's all here.

MANHUNTER
No. Booster stay there. We'll take care of it.
(no response)
Booster?

BEETLE (V.O.)
He just went in.

This does not please Manhunter. He MOVES.

INT. U.N. CORRIDOR - BOOSTER

strides excitedly through the building.

BOOSTER
Alright, time to bust some --

KA-CHICK!-- a gun is pressed to Booster's head. It's the terrorist from the main entrance.

INT. U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL

The room is quiet as a Goon confers with Loube.

DALAI
What is the problem?

LORD
The Justice League of America.

Loube turns to his audience.

LOUBE
Ladies and Gentlemen, someone has tried to be smart. Now we will all pay the price.
(to his Goons)
Shoot me dead!

The Goons raise their weapons --

BANG!-- the DOOR to the Council BURSTS OPEN. In walks the Entrance Terrorist with his hostage -- Booster Gold.

LOUBE
(to his Goons)
Hold.
(they lower their guns)
Excellent. Someone was not as smart as they thought. Now we have a Super-Hero as a hostage. Where did you find him? Are there others?
(no response)
Answer me.

The Terrorist speaks -- it is Manhunter's VOICE.

TERRORIST
Booster...

The terrorist TRANSFORMS into Martian Manhunter.

MANHUNTER
... bust some heads.

Booster HOWLS with glee and goes into action. He flies, he punches -- he punches, he flies. My friends, Booster takes out these Goons as violently as he's allowed to in this time slot -- and enjoys every second of it.

Afterwards, he floats down directly in front of Loube. Booster wiggles his eyebrows. Loube looks unafraid. His hand goes to the bomb.

LOUBE
You leave me no choice.

Booster's force field suddenly shimmers AROUND LOUBE.

BOOSTER
Go for it, pal.

Loube sees the force field. Now he looks afraid.

INT. U.N. - SECURITY COUNCIL DOORS - MINUTES LATER

Fire, Ice, Mr. Miracle, and Booster watch as the goons are carted away by the police. Martian Manhunter sits against a wall looking extremely exhausted. Chief Marvel approaches.

STANLEY
This doesn't mean I like you guys, but... thanks.

MR. MIRACLE
Just doing our job, sir.

Loube is carried out daintily on a stretcher.

STANLEY
The Bomb Squad'll take care of this guy.

BOOSTER
Just take him someplace safe and let him blow up.

Beetle arrives.

BEETLE
Did I miss anything? What's with Manhunter?

FIRE
I guess shape-shifting takes a lot out of him.

ICE
You think he'll be okay?

BOOSTER
You think he'll be okay? Hey, I did all the work in there.

FIRE
No, what you did was get caught. You disobeyed orders and entered the building. If Manhunter hadn't of shown up and taken out that terrorist, you'd be dead right now. He saved your butt.

BOOSTER
Well, don't everybody thank me all at once.

APPLAUSE is heard from the Council. Our Heroes go in.

INT. SECURITY COUNCIL

Maxwell Lord stands at the dais. The JLA enter and stay near the back.

LORD
How could I have known, when I arranged for the Dalai Lama to speak here two and a half weeks ago, that the world situation would deteriorate so drastically. Now, more than ever, we need a voice of reason. A compassionate teacher to guide us through these dark times. The Dalai Lama.

The Council applauds as the Dalai rises, shakes Lord's hand, and steps up to the dais.

DALAI
I have fought all my life for world peace. But apparently Mankind still feels the need to self-destruct. If all of us in this room resolved to disarm tomorrow, it still wouldn't insure the future of this planet, because all it takes to make a nuclear bomb today is one madman with the right screwdriver. The technology exists, therefore so does the threat. So what <u>is</u> the answer? Can we do what God did? God told Noah, "Build an Ark. I'm going to start all over again." Can we do that, start from scratch? Populate an "Ark" with people who lack the necessary knowledge to invent the bomb? Can we safely sequester this new civilization and then cleanse our world to begin anew?
(pause)
You bet. If I were God, that's what I'd do. Fortunately I'm better than God.
(MORE)

DALAI (CONT'D)
You may have noticed people have been disappearing lately. That's because I have set in motion events that will irreversibly lead to the destruction of this earth.

As he speaks, the Dalai lowers his hands -- a FLASH OF LIGHT shines behind the podium -- he raises his hands -- holding the BLACK HELMET.

He places the helmet on his head. A BLACK PLANE OF LIGHT passes over him and he changes into:

The LORD OF CHAOS.

DALAI/LORD OF CHAOS
For I am the Lord of Chaos. And from the ashes I will rebuild our future.

And with that, he BLASTS UP from the dais -- THROUGH THE ROOF -- and is gone.

Maxwell Lord looks floored -- as does the Justice League, who are too stunned to take action.

END OF ACT IV

ACT V

EXT. JLA HQ - ROOF - DAY

The Bug WHOOSHES to a landing and everyone quickly piles out. Beetle locks the door, then presses a button on a small black box on his key chain. SQUEAK-SQUEAK -- the familiar sound of an every-day car alarm rings out.

INT. THE BUG

Billy Cambell crawls out of a cramped storage locker -- his enthusiastic fascination almost all gone now. He goes over to the hatch and pulls on the release lever.

It doesn't budge. Two huge deadbolts stay stuck in place. He sighs and wanders around -- a pained expression on his face. He searches through storage cabinets, then opens a door. It leads to a small airline-sized bathroom.

Billy gasps with relief and ducks in.

INT. JLA HQ - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Everyone huddles around the central table.

BOOSTER
I can't believe it. The Dalai Lama. It's always the quiet guys.

BEETLE
Now we know the man behind the mask.

FIRE
Yeah, the "God of Badness" or whatever he called himself.

MR. MIRACLE
The Lord of Chaos.

MANHUNTER
We should continue our search for David Cambell. He was part of what started this -- he may know a way to stop it.

LORD
If we're lucky, Chaos, the captives, and Cambell may all be in one central location. The so-called Ark.

ICE
What is the Ark?

BOOSTER
A real big Pizza Hut?

MANHUNTER
It would need to be protected from radiation.

BOOSTER
A lead Pizza Hut?

BEETLE
We have Pizza Huts in the year 3000?

MR. MIRACLE
A bomb shelter.

FIRE
How do we find it?

BEETLE
I have deep radar sensors on The Bug. They should pick it up.

LORD
Good. I'm going to have Oberon set up to man the monitors. I'd like regular reports.

MANHUNTER
We'll call in hourly. Let's go.

INT. THE BUG

Billy sits in one of the flight chairs looking bored and tired. Suddenly there is a SQUEAK and the hatch starts to unlock. He crawls into his favorite storage compartment just as the League enters. They strap in.

BEETLE
We'll have to go pretty high up to cover the necessary ground.

MANHUNTER
How high?

BEETLE
How does eighteen miles grab you?

BOOSTER
Uh-oh. Break out the barf bags.

Beetle yanks back on the controls.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Lord is going over procedures with Oberon.

LORD
And everything downlinks from the North America satellite.

Oberon pulls a chair up to the monitors and stands on it.

OBERON
I just got one question. Why all this? Why did you form the League?

LORD
To fight for justice. To serve our country...

OBERON
Aw come on. You can't fool me with that stuff. You're one of those guys who always has a hidden agenda, a special angle.

LORD
Like you?
(off Oberon's look)
Alright, look at it this way. When the world is stable, it works. I envisioned the League as a means to keep it working.

OBERON
And what if you abuse the power?

LORD
I already have power -- I know how to keep it under control.
(smiles)
And besides -- now I have you as my conscience.

A BUZZER sounds.

STACEY (V.O.)
Transferring Janet Cambell.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BUG - DAY

Everyone is unstrapping.

BEETLE
Eighth floor: stratosphere.

Beetle starts working on his computers. Manhunter punches a button and after a beat Lord appears on a monitor.

MANHUNTER
We've arrived.

LORD (ON T.V.)
I just got a frantic phone call from Janet Cambell. Billy's missing.

BEETLE
Oh, no. The little kid?

LORD (ON T.V.)
Yeah. It's starting to hit close to home.

BEETLE
And I'll be damned if we can't put a stop to it.

Lord blinks off. Beetle starts punching buttons -- a man with a mission.

On a large screen a map of North America appears. A little BLUE STRIP starts growing from the northeast corner -- slowly moving down the coast -- covering a strip of land about a hundred miles wide. A WHITE DOT appears in the blue.

FIRE
Is that it?

BEETLE
No. It must be a nuclear waste dump. Heavy radiation.

He punches a button and the white dot disappears.

BOOSTER
This is going to take forever.

MR. MIRACLE
I once read that the President has his own personal shelters in every major city.

Two more white dots appear on the map.

MANHUNTER
We need a way to isolate the one we want.

BEETLE
No problem. What's going to distinguish any bomb shelter from the one we're looking for?

FIRE
It'll be badly decorated?

BEETLE
No. It'll have thousands of people in it. I'll scan for life forms, too.

ICE
You can do that?

BEETLE
Sure. Watch, I'll scan The Bug.

He punches some buttons. On a small screen an image of The Bug pops up filled with red dots.

BEETLE
There we are. Seven life forms.

Booster frowns and starts counting the people in the cabin -- his lips actually moving. Beetle bubbles with pride.

BEETLE
It even registers Manhunter.

Booster frowns and counts again.

BEETLE
I didn't know if the scanners would pick up his Martian body.

BOOSTER
Um... Beetle?

BEETLE
Yeah?

BOOSTER
There are only six people in here.

Now Beetle frowns. He looks down at the map of The Bug while the whole League starts counting themselves -- looking more than a little silly. Beetle raises his eyebrows, turns, and points to the back of The Bug.

BEETLE
Whatever it is -- it's in that locker.

Everyone's eyes follow Beetle's finger -- tensing up.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Maxwell Lord and Oberon are watching television NEWS REPORTS when Beetle's image fills the main screen.

BEETLE (ON T.V.)
Max. We found the kid. He's apparently been stowed away in The Bug since Springfield. Want him back?

Lord has to think on this one. Then:

LORD
No time. I'll call Janet Cambell and tell her he's okay. But make sure you keep him that way. There'll be hell to pay if that kid is hurt.

BEETLE (ON T.V.)
Don't worry. We'll take care of him. He'll be perfectly safe.

INT. THE BUG

Booster Gold is holding a very frightened Billy Cambell in his hands -- three feet OFF THE GROUND.

BOOSTER
How the hell did you get in here? You stupid little squirt...

BILLY
I just wanted to find out what happened to my dad.

MR. MIRACLE
BOOSTER!

For the first time in this story we Mr. Miracle ANGRY.

MR. MIRACLE
Put that child down -- NOW!

Booster sneers and lowers the kid to the floor. Billy is on the verge of tears.

BOOSTER
Great. Now we're the Day Care League of America.

BILLY
It's all my fault. I made my dad leave. Please, you gotta find him.

MR. MIRACLE
Don't worry, Billy. We will.

BILLY
I just hope he's okay.

ICE
(puts arm around him)
I know. I'm worried about my folks, too.

Manhunter opens a compartment JAM-PACKED with Oreos.

MANHUNTER
Here. Have an Oreo.

Billy smiles. We PAN TO the map of North America as the thin blue strip creeps down the continent at a snail's pace.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUG - ON THE MAP - LATER

Two thirds of the continent is now covered in blue with white dots. In the area of Nevada, a SLIGHTLY RED DOT appears. We PULL BACK. Beetle, Booster and Manhunter are hunched over the map.

MANHUNTER
Is that it?

Beetle punches some keys -- shakes his head.

BEETLE
Only about four hundred people. It's gotta be NORAD.

Everyone sighs and we PAN OVER TO MR. MIRACLE as he dials a radio phone.

INT. THE FREE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Barda is house cleaning. She looks distracted, clearly worried about something. She's wiping off the table when she finds a spot of dirt that won't come off. She rubs harder.

CRACK -- wood splinters as she accidently punches her hand right through. She fumbles to quickly cover the spot with a place mat. That's when the PHONE RINGS. She jumps for it.

BARDA
Scott?

BACK IN THE BUG

where we INTERCUT between the two locations:

MR. MIRACLE
Yes, honey. I got the message you called. Is everything alright?

BARDA
No...well, yes...well... I was just worried about you.

MR. MIRACLE
I'm okay. These are good people. I don't feel like such an outcast here. I know it's not what you want right now, but it's something I have to do.

BARDA
I'm not just worried about us. We're going to have a child.

MR. MIRACLE
I know. That's the plan. I just have to...

BARDA
No. I mean now, honey. I'm pregnant.

Miracle's stunned. Barda smiles.

BARDA
Looks like we're going to have another Miracle in the house.

Mr. Miracle beams as we move to:

THE FRONT OF THE BUG

Fire joins Manhunter, Billy, Booster and a worried Beetle.

BEETLE
Tell me about the future, Booster.

BOOSTER
Um... it's okay. The traffic's about the same, but dry cleaners are much faster.

BEETLE
No. I mean... Are there wars? Nuclear bombs?

MANHUNTER
What are you getting at, Beetle?

BEETLE
Can't we just look at Booster and know if we end up stopping all this?

MANHUNTER
Not necessarily. Booster could be from the future that the Lord of Chaos creates.

FIRE
The product of a perfect society? Booster? No way.

BILLY
How about this one, Beetle?

The boy points at a VERY BRIGHT RED DOT on the map in the vicinity of Arizona. Beetle types frantically.

BEETLE
Yow. Three, maybe four thousand warm bodies in that one. We found it! Thanks, Billy.

MANHUNTER
Take us down, Beetle. We'll report to Lord on the way.

Everybody straps in.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARIZONA DESERT - DAY

We're CRUISING over barren landscape covered with low hills. The Bug flies INTO FRAME -- wings folding.

INT. BUG

Everybody is out of their chairs, huddled around the windows. Maxwell Lord's face is on one of the video monitors.

BEETLE
We're right over it. We just need to find an entrance.

BOOSTER
Then we'll blast in and take out Mr. Gloomy once and for all.

LORD (ON T.V.)
No.

Everyone but Manhunter turns to the Lord monitor.

FIRE
What do you mean, no?

LORD (ON T.V.)
I want you to hang back. I have an open line to the Pentagon. They'll take care of this.

BOOSTER
Hey, we can handle it ourselves.

LORD (ON T.V.)
No. We can have an air strike scrambled and there in thirty minutes.

Now everyone starts YELLING at the billionaire's image.

FIRE
Oh, good. Is it just me or does it seem like we've been getting jerked around here?

MR. MIRACLE
Thirty minutes may be too late.

BEETLE
Besides, we're better equipped to infiltrate and take care of this.

BOOSTER
Hey, we're super-heroes, not lackeys.

FIRE
Yeah, why did you hire us in the first place?

LORD (ON T.V.)
That's right. I hired you. I call the shots. And when I'm not around, you take orders from Martian Manhunter. Now... Manhunter, get your team together here, and tell them to fall back.

Everyone looks at Manhunter. He stares back at them with his black eyes. He turns to Lord's image.

Martian Manhunter SWITCHES OFF Lord's monitor.

MANHUNTER
Let's show this jerk what the Justice League is all about.

Everyone stares at the green man in stunned silence. Then:

ICE
Ooo, I wouldn't have done that.

KA-BLAM -- something EXPLODES outside and The Bug ROCKS.

BILLY
What was THAT!

BEETLE
I think we found the entrance.

EXT. ARK ENTRANCE - DAY

Two huge CEMENT DOORS are dug into the side of a hill -- along with a deadly battery of SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES.

BACK IN THE BUG

Manhunter starts barking orders:

MANHUNTER
Booster -- force field. Beetle, do you have weapons?

BEETLE
No... but I can improvise.

Booster twists his belt -- a SHIMMERING EFFECT can be seen outside the window just in time to deflect a DIRECT HIT.

FIRE
What do you mean, improvise?

BEETLE
I've got an anti-missile system I've been dying to try out. It locks onto their targeting radar. I think I can deflect them.

MANHUNTER
To where?

BEETLE
(grinning)
How does right back where they came from grab you?

Beetle attacks his keyboard.

EXT. ARK ENTRANCE

The bank of missiles tracks the darting Bug. VA-OOSH -- it FIRES.

A single missile shoots up into the sky -- heads for the Bug -- and suddenly TURNS AROUND. It traces a path in the air and shoots right back towards the Ark entrance.

KA-BLEWY -- the missile launcher EXPLODES.

IN THE BUG

everyone cheers.

BOOSTER
Okay. The missile deflector I like.

MANHUNTER
Let's go down and check it out.

EXT. ARK ENTRANCE

The Bug drops down for a landing about a hundred feet from the entrance.

INT. BUG

ViewCams and ear transceivers are being passed out. Beetle turns to Manhunter.

BEETLE
I have to stay in The Bug, right?

Manhunter nods. Beetle sighs, tossing his RopeGun to Mr. Miracle.

BEETLE
Here. I won't be needing this.

BOOSTER
(to Manhunter)
Mars Man, what you did back there with Lord... no human would have the guts.

MANHUNTER
Thank you, Booster. I used you as a role model.

An ALARM RINGS -- everyone jumps.

FIRE
Are we under attack?

BEETLE
No. It's not from the Ark.

Beetle punches some buttons. A caption on the North America map changes from "Deep Scanning" to "Long Range Radar." THOUSANDS of TINY LINES are starting to grow from everywhere: most from the United States, a bunch from the ocean, some from Central America. Beetle turns white.

BEETLE
Oh, my God.

BILLY
What are those?

Billy is pointing out the window. In the distance we can see a half-dozen EXHAUST TRAILS climbing into the sky.

MR. MIRACLE
The T.V! Turn up the sound.

Beetle does -- and a very rattled Sherry North reports:

SHERRY (ON T.V.)
...and there is no indication as to what set it off. I repeat: A full scale nuclear attack has been simultaneously enacted by both the Soviet Union and the United States. There are unconfirmed reports that China, India, Israel, and South Africa have also launched. No one can tell us why -- but it's happening.

Sherry is visibly shaken -- while those in The Bug reel with shock.

ICE
(tears building)
It's all over. We're too late.

END OF ACT V

ACT VI

EXT. ARK ENTRANCE - DAY

Martian Manhunter is examining a panel while Fire, Ice and Mr. Miracle stand by.

FIRE
Every nuclear missile in the world has been launched. What's the point?

MR. MIRACLE
There's always hope, Fire.

MANHUNTER
I've lost one planet. I'm not going to let it happen again.

Manhunter RIPS the panel open violently. Mr. Miracle immediately starts twisting wires to open the entrance.

MANHUNTER
Beetle, what about your diverting system?

IN THE BUG

Beetle is pounding his control board while Booster and Billy stand behind him. Everyone talks fast -- like it's the end of the world.

BEETLE
I can only stop them within a hundred mile radius from here. We'll be safe, but in twenty minutes the rest of the world with be ash.

Beetle turns to Booster. The following is quick and frantic.

BEETLE
Booster, why are there no more nuclear weapons in the future?

BOOSTER
I don't know.

BEETLE
Think! This is important.

BOOSTER
Get off my back! I was never any good at history.

BEETLE
Do we disarm? Invent some sort of shield?

BOOSTER
...yeah. Some kind of defense system made them obsolete.

BEETLE
What... like Star Wars? That eventually works?

BOOSTER
No...

BEETLE
WHAT THEN!

BOOSTER
I don't know. Wait... I think it has to do with satellites.

Beetle is suddenly inspired.

BEETLE
That's it! Satellites. Booster, you're a genius.

BOOSTER
I am?

BEETLE
If I can uplink my missile deflection program to a satellite network, I may be able to cover enough area.

BOOSTER
Then go for it.

Booster bolts out the door and Beetle hits buttons.

INT. JLA CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Beetle's image flickers to life in front of Oberon and a very pissed Maxwell Lord.

BEETLE (ON T.V.)
Max, I need the access codes to your satellite system.

LORD
I got the impression I wasn't part of this effort any more.

BEETLE (ON T.V.)
Cut the crap, Lord. In case you haven't noticed, Armageddon has started -- and I may have a way to stop it.

Lord instantly brightens.

INT. ARK ENTRANCE

Miracle jumps away from the control box as the giant doors HISS open. Booster snaps on his FORCE FIELD.

BA-BA-BA-BAM! Six TIBETAN COMMANDOES blast away uselessly as Booster walks forward -- his force field in front and the League behind.

INT. ARK ENTRANCE

BAM -- Booster's force field hits the Commandos -- SMASHES all six against the wall. They drop to the ground. A corridor leads in two directions.

MANHUNTER
Miracle, Fire, Ice -- down the left. Booster and I will take the right. Beetle, how's the satellite linkup going?

BEETLE (V.O.)
I have to reprogram the initiation sequence.

BOOSTER
Hey, don't send these back where they came from.

BEETLE (V.O.)
Doy now. I'm going to re-plot them to the sun. If it works, that is.

MANHUNTER
Alright, League. Let's find the Lord of Chaos.

They split up.

INT. BUG

Beetle now has two monitors showing a full globe of the world -- missile paths growing. Four small screens show League ViewCam POINT-OF-VIEWS. Beetle hits some keys and SIX SATELLITE ICONS appear around the earth maps.

BEETLE
Bingo!

BILLY
Beetle, are we all going to die?

BEETLE
Not if I can help it.

BOOSTER (V.O.)
Hey what's that music?

Beetle frowns and catches a glimpse at Booster's monitor.

INT. CORRIDOR

CRASH - BAM - Manhunter and Booster are making their way down the hallway -- bashing down doors all the way. They're finding nothing but storage rooms and empty cafeterias.

BOOSTER
Don't you hear it? Classical music...

And he's right. Soft SYMPHONIC MUSIC is filtering through the hallways. Booster kicks open a door.

They've found a ROOM filled with about ten PRISONERS. Some in business suits, some in pajamas -- all with a strange glaze in their eyes.

MANHUNTER
We've found some captives.

The prisoners suddenly GROWL and attack the super-heros.

BOOSTER
And they're not happy to see us.

BAP - SLUG -- Booster and Manhunter punch back the teeming mash -- they're aggressive, but not very strong.

INT. BUG

Beetle catches a quick glance at Booster's monitor. The shot shakes from the fighting.

BEETLE
They must be brainwashed.

FIRE (V.O.)
Watch out!

Beetle looks at Fire's monitor in time to see:

INT. CORRIDOR INTERSECTION

Five armed Commandos are racing right towards Fire, Ice, and Mr. Miracle. Fire and Miracle jump though the intersection -- but Ice stays behind.

FIRE
Ice, come on!

Fire and Mr. Miracle motion for her to join them in escaping. Ice looks at them. Then turns around.

CRA-A-A-A-CLE!-- the floor of the crossing hallway is suddenly covered with a six inch layer of ice, so --

Instead of turning the corner and blasting our heros to shreds, the Commandos slip and slide right through the intersection like bobsleds -- their SCREAMS ending after multiple THUDS.

Ice turns to Fire.

ICE
Not bad for a complete washout, huh?

Fire smiles proudly.

INT. CORRIDOR CORNER

Booster and Manhunter zip around a corner -- right into gun-wielding Commandos. BA-BA-BAM!-- they duck back. We stay with the Commandos as they FOLLOW the heroes around the bend --

And Booster and Manhunter are GONE. The Commandos look around in confusion.

BOOSTER (O.S.)
Look, Wendy. We can fly.

The Commandos look up -- Booster and Manhunter are FLOATING right above them. They come CRASHING down. Classical MUSIC continues to play.

INT. BUG

Beetle's finger is poised above a blinking green button. Lord's image is visible on a screen.

BEETLE
Okay... this will probably fry every transponder.

LORD (ON T.V.)
Like it matters?

Beetle hits the button. NUMBERS start streaming down a computer screen as the six satellite icons on the map begin to FLASH.

EXT. EARTH ORBIT

We're looking down at a deceptively peaceful looking planet as a COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE slips into view. A series of lights start BLINKING -- the antenna MOVES.

INT. BUG

Beetle is watching the ViewCam monitors. The images are starting to BREAK UP every once and a while.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
How long until we know?

BEETLE
Nine or ten minutes. Gives us about five to spare.

INT. CORRIDOR - AT HELMET ROOM

On one end of the corridor: VAOOOOSH -- Fire blasts flames in front of a number of oncoming Commandos.

FIRE
Run or fry, boys.

They run.

On the other end of the corridor: CRA-A-ACLE -- Ice creates a block of frozen water that seals off the hallway completely -- just in time to hold back another set of Commandos.

In between the two: Mr. Miracle is standing in front of a set of double doors forced open into a room. In the center: The Black Helmet of Chaos.

MR. MIRACLE
Hey! We found the helmet!

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
What? All by itself?

MR. MIRACLE
Yes, strangely enough.

FIRE
So go get it!

MR. MIRACLE
I will -- as soon as I figure out how.

Fire and Ice frown and walk over to look inside:

INT. HELMET ROOM

We'll start in the middle and move out: The Black Helmet is under a locked glass case. The case rests on some kind of fulcrum devise which is in perfect balance with a ten foot square block of cement dangling above it. A foot out from the perimeter of the block are a series of horizontal spring-loaded STEEL SPIKES. Before the spikes -- a seven foot wide moat. It looks BOTTOMLESS. All of this protected by a thick metal gate with the biggest lock you've seen in your life.

MR. MIRACLE
I've spotted a number of booby traps.

ICE
Can we help?

MR. MIRACLE
Not really. I need to do this myself. Beetle, I'm removing my communications equipment so I can concentrate.

BEETLE (V.O)
Roger.

FIRE
It looks impossible.

MR. MIRACLE
It looks.... challenging.

Miracle takes off his ViewCam and ear transceiver. A lock pick suddenly appears in his hand.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
Fire. Ice...

INT. CORRIDOR

Incredibly loud CLASSICAL MUSIC plays as Manhunter yells:

MANHUNTER
With the Dalai separated from the helmet, we should try to find David Cambell. He may know how to render the helmet powerless.

FIRE (V.O.)
Got it.

Manhunter turns and bashes in a door. He finds a room filled to the brim with toilet paper. Booster kicks in another door and finds:

A full ORCHESTRA playing -- the one that disappeared.

BOOSTER
Well, at least I know I'm not going crazy anymore.

MANHUNTER
Better yet, they're quite good.

And even better than that -- they don't attack. The orchestra doesn't seem to care about them.

INT. HELMET ROOM

Mr. Miracle can been seen out across the hallway. The locked gate is ALREADY OPENED. He crouches -- RUNS in -- JUMPS.

Mr. Miracle tumbles in the air and lands on the other side of the bottomless moat. He pauses for a beat, then takes off his cape and flings it in on the floor in front of him.

SWOOP - CLANG -- the spikes meet in the center of the room -- blocking the way. There's about a foot of horizontal space between them.

Mr. Miracle takes a deep breath.

INT. CORRIDOR

Fire BLASTS a doorknob. It MELTS and drops off. She kicks open the door.

The ROOM inside is large. And it contains DOZEN of people -- all sitting quietly in row upon row of chairs. The people look up at the two women. They all stand. They start walking towards the door.

Fire and Ice back away -- prepare to do battle. The people start piling out of the room -- ignore the girls completely -- and shuffle away like lemmings.

ICE
They're not fighting.

BOOSTER (V.O.)
You found some of those too?

INT. BUG

Beetle is not watching the ViewCam monitors. His eyes are locked on the missile map.

FIRE (V.O.)
Yeah. They're zonked out -- but don't seem angry about it.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
They must not be totally processed yet.

David Cambell's zombied-out face walks past Ice's monitor.

BILLY
There's my dad!

Beetle whips around to look -- Cambell's gone.

BEETLE/FIRE/BOOSTER
WHERE!?

BILLY
He was just there. In that one.

BEETLE
Ice. Pan around. We gotta find him again.

The image on Ice's monitor starts jerking around.

INT. HELMET ROOM

Mr. Miracle has somehow worked his way halfway through a gap in the closed spikes -- like the ultimate limbo dance. He twists slowly, pulling his stomach in another inch, until --

He pops out on the other side. Miracle gasps for air. After a beat he steps underneath the cement block and in front of the glass-enclosed helmet.

Out comes a tiny pick -- CLICK -- it's instantly unlocked. Now comes the fun part. Miracle looks up at the cement block, then back at the Black Helmet. He reaches out his hand to touch it.

And the helmet TRANSFORMS into a half dozen SQUEAKING RATS.

The rats jump off the platform -- the fulcrum goes up -- Miracle JUMPS BACK -- the cement block comes CRASHING DOWN -- a quarter inch in front of him.

He chokes on the dust -- cramped, but alive. Then a RUMBLING is heard. Miracle cranes his head around to look:

The bottomless moat is WIDENING -- coming his way. The whole floor will be gone in seconds.

INT. CROWDED CORRIDOR

Fire and Ice are sifting through the mass of oblivious zombies, pointing their ViewCams at each one.

ICE
How about this one?

BEETLE (V.O.)
No.

FIRE
This is crazy.

INT. BUG

Beetle watches his monitors carefully.

FIRE (V.O.)
There's so many of them!

BEETLE
Keep looking. Billy -- help me out here.

There's no answer. Beetle turns around. The hatch of the Bug is opened a crack -- and Billy is nowhere to be seen.

INT. HELMET ROOM

The floor of the helmet room slides away from under Mr. Miracle as he grabs onto the spikes like they were a ladder -- a ladder going nowhere.

The floor continues on its way -- underneath the dropped cement slab -- until it is completely gone. The slab FALLS -- and never hits bottom.

Miracle takes a breath. At least he's still alive.

Then the spikes begin to OPEN. Miracle looks to the door. It's twelve feet away -- too far to jump. He climbs around to the other side of the spikes -- they keep moving into the wall. Miracle looks up above the door.

A white-hot SPOTLIGHT is mounted above the entrance.

Miracle smiles. He pulls out Beetle's RopeGun -- points it-- at the light -- seconds left before his handholds disappear. He FIRES.

The tiny ropes fly out -- grab hold of the light -- the spikes slip into the wall -- Miracle DROPS -- SWINGS OUT -- the spotlight SNAPS OFF -- Miracle arcs --

And -- THUNK -- he grabs hold of the bottom edge of the doorway.

INT. CORRIDOR - AT HELMET ROOM

Miracle pulls himself into the hall and grabs his transceiver. We INTERCUT between:

MR. MIRACLE
The helmet was a fake. I repeat, the helmet was a fake.

MANHUNTER
Then the Lord of Chaos still exists. Has anyone found Cambell?

BEETLE
No. Plus, I lost the kid.

BOOSTER
Good going, Beetle. Remind me to never hire you as a baby-sitter.

MANHUNTER
Let's reconvene at The Bug.

BEETLE
Better hurry, it's Standing Room Only.

EXT. ARK ENTRANCE

And Beetle wasn't kidding. The entrance and the Bug are swarming with whacked-out PEOPLE. They pour out of the open cement doors and mill about like the zombies from "Night of the Living Dead" -- except their complexions are a whole lot better.

Manhunter, Booster, Fire, Ice, and Mr. Miracle shove their way out.

BOOSTER
This is worse than a comic book convention.

Suddenly a FLASH OF LIGHT bursts in the middle of the crowd. The mass of people parts instinctively, spreading out, leaving room for the Bug, the Justice League -- and a SWIRLING VORTEX in between them.

The vortex slows -- takes shape -- becomes the LORD OF CHAOS. He spreads his arms and BOLTS OF LIGHTENING crackle.

BOOSTER
This dude doesn't look so tough.

Fire sticks her hands out -- VOOOOSH -- a green jet shoots at Chaos -- but Chaos waves a hand -- the flame BENDS -- heading right for Mr. Miracle --

CRA-A-A-ACKLE -- Ice shoots toward Mr. Miracle, this time not encasing him, but creating a protective wall of ice -- shielding him from Fire's flame.

Manhunter and Booster suddenly jump -- FLY together -- right at Chaos. And right THROUGH HIM, as if he were made of air. They smack into Fire.

Mr. Miracle flips towards Chaos like a Ninja warrior. But Chaos's eyes GLOW and -- KA-ZAP -- BOLTS of energy shoot out of the sockets -- SLAMMING into Miracle.

Mr. Miracle flies back -- hits the ground -- hard. The League runs over to Miracle's semi-conscious body.

MANHUNTER
His power is too concentrated. We need to hit him together.

Chaos LAUGHS. The League turns to look at him.

CHAOS
Together or alone, you are useless.

ICE
Why are you doing this? You're a man of peace.

CHAOS
I am no longer a man. I am a god. I am no longer incumbered by the pathetic mortal weaknesses that you are cursed with.
(he points at Fire)
The petty vanities that run your lives all the while hiding away the true ugliness inside.
(points at Booster)
The selfishness that rules your very existence.
(points at Ice)
Your people have the arrogance to call themselves gods. Your inadequacy proves them wrong.

He points at the camera on Ice's shoulder.

INT. BUG

Chaos's face glares directly at Beetle through a monitor.

CHAOS (ON T.V.)
You are weak, hiding away behind the technology that you think makes you important.

Beetle clenches his fists -- not looking at his map monitor. If he had been he would have noticed that a number of missile trails have STARTED TO DIVERT.

BACK OUTSIDE

Chaos points at Mr. Miracle.

CHAOS
Evolution on the Earth has reversed, as your kind gives birth to further generations of freaks.
(points at Manhunter)
Mars was fortunate. A pestilence did the work that I am now doing here. And this time you will not escape.

He raises his arms with a flourish.

CHAOS
A new era with be brought forth -- thriving in the glory of Chaos!

INT. BUG

Beetle finally looks at his radar. ALL the missile tracks have started to divert now -- and as they do, they begin to BLINK OFF THE SCREEN. He whips around to the front window.

BEETLE
Justice League! Get the hell out of there! The missiles have been diverted!

OUTSIDE

Chaos suddenly looks up into the sky.

BEETLE (V.O.)
I repeat: the missiles have been diverted!

CHAOS
No! NO!

MANHUNTER
Now!

The League snaps into action -- as one.

Fire SHOOTS -- IGNITING the distracted Lord of Chaos. He turns to them in flames as -- CRA-A-A-ACKLE -- Ice yelps from the power of her throw as Chaos is ENCASED in a huge block of ice. And he's STILL on fire inside of it.

Booster HOWLS -- his force field appears wrapped around his fist like super boxing glove. He turns to Manhunter. They both simultaneously PUNCH the block of ice.

KA-BLAM -- the ice shatters, exploding everywhere. Everyone ducks from the rain of frozen water. A black PUFF OF SMOKE blows away into the wind.

And Chaos is nowhere to be seen.

Most everyone is a little surprised. Except:

BOOSTER
We did it! We saved the whole cockamamie world! All by ourselves! We did it! Yow!

ICE
Is he really dead?

MANHUNTER
I don't know.

Booster starts hooting and hollering. Everyone but Manhunter starts to smile. It sure seems like it's all over.

Well, not quite. The VOICE of a very angry Lord of Chaos BOOMS through the air:

CHAOS (V.O.)
YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR INTERFERENCE!

ICE
What does he mean?

BEETLE (V.O.)
I hope it's just a very bad lawsuit.

No, it's not that. The League and The Bug DISAPPEAR. No flashing lights -- they just blink out of existence.

END OF ACT VI

ACT VII

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Pandemonium reins. The streets are choked with traffic -- people are running in every direction -- everyone's trying to get away from incoming disaster that they don't realize has been averted.

The Justice League of America and The Bug MATERIALIZE right in the middle of all this. Ice is SCREAMING from the experience -- and everyone else isn't doing much better.

BOOSTER
Hello -- reality check!

FIRE
What just happened?

MANHUNTER
Chaos brought us here.

ICE
Why?

BOOSTER
Maybe he was just trying to be a nice guy. You know, save us air fare and all.

BEETLE (V.O.)
Oh my God...

INT. BUG

Beetle is looking at his monitors -- and it's something bad.

BEETLE
I know why... I missed one.

Sure enough, on Beetle's radar map there is ONE LONE MISSILE TRAIL left -- its arc across the globe almost complete.

BOOSTER (V.O.)
How? What? When? Why?

BEETLE
I don't know. The jamming program has no effect on it. It's from the Middle East -- must be using some kind of outdated guidance system. I can't stop it.

MANHUNTER (V.O.)
Where's it coming down?

BEETLE
Right where we're standing.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE

Booster raises a hand.

BOOSTER
Taxi!

He heads for the street as -- KA-VOOM -- the Lord of Chaos materializes in front of the League. His hands GLOW with power.

CHAOS
My vengeance will be to watch you burn within the fires of your own creation.

FIRE
Go spit!

Fire actually LUNGES for Chaos. He swings an arm out and effortlessly BAPS her away.

Fire hits the ground hard and tumbles. She scrambles up to her feet -- a nasty GASH on her face. She touches the blood. Chaos LAUGHS, raises his arms, and -- VOOM -- shoots ENERGY BLASTS at the girl in green.

And that's when Booster leaps in front of Fire.

KA-SLAM -- the energy blasts nail Booster -- his body SAILS into the air and lands.

FIRE
Booster!

INT. BUG

Beetle grimaces.

BEETLE
Okay. Time for some action.

He starts The Bug and yanks on the controls.

OUTSIDE

The Bug starts to rise -- pivots around towards Chaos. Chaos laughs and throws out an even stronger ENERGY BOLT at the hovering ship.

CLANG -- The Bug is hit incredibly hard -- tumbles backwards end over end like a plastic toy -- completely across the square and in between two buildings.

We hear a CRASH.

CUT TO:

INT. ARK - NEAR ENTRANCE

We're with DAVID CAMBELL as he walks like a zombie towards the open doors. His son Billy tears around a corner.

BILLY
Dad!

David walks right past him.

BILLY
Dad! It's me, Billy!

David stops. He turns around and looks at his son -- still vacant. He steps over to Billy. The boy looks at him pleadingly.

BILLY
I'm sorry I yelled at you. I love you, Dad.

Life suddenly fills David's eyes. Just then a very ragged and insane looking COMMANDO tears around the corner -- his weapon raised to kill anyone on sight.

David's fist shoots out -- BASH -- knocking the Commando right off his feet. The Commando falls to the ground -- out cold.

David Cambell kneels down in front of Billy. He blinks. Then he smiles.

DAVID
Hey, Sport. How's it going?

He hugs his son desperately. Billy beams.

CUT TO:

INT. JLA CONTROL ROOM

All video screens are dead. Oberon is screaming and punching buttons --

OBERON
Justice League! Beetle, come in! How the hell did you get here?! What's going on?! Beetle!

-- and Maxwell Lord is looking out the window -- looking at death.

A MISSILE TRAIL is approaching from the east.

CUT TO:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE

Chaos faces off with the League. He puts his hands on his hips.

CHAOS
You're all too late!

Manhunter steps forward. He grimaces.

MANHUNTER
I don't think so.

The Martian suddenly CATAPULTS straight UP.

Chaos is caught a little off guard -- he expected another frontal attack. He looks up into the sky.

EXT. THE SKY ABOVE MANHATTAN

Manhunter stops in the air above the skyscrapers -- looking for the incoming missile. KA-ZAP -- an ENERGY FIELD suddenly wraps around him and we PAN to its source:

The Lord of Chaos floats in the sky -- both arms jutting out -- the energy field emanating from his hands. Manhunter tries to move. He can't. He's trapped. Chaos cackles:

CHAOS
Your persistence is admirable, Martian -- but unfounded. You're far more advanced than these pathetic creatures. Join me. I can protect you from the oncoming destruction. I will rule the world with you at my side.

MANHUNTER
Never. These are my people now.

CHAOS
Then watch them die.

MANHUNTER
This must not happen!

CHAOS
What is there to stop me?

INT. THE BUG

Blood drips down Beetle's grinning face.

BEETLE
How does ten tons of Blue Beetle grab you?

IN THE SKY

Dented, but not down -- THE BUG swoops out of nowhere behind the Lord of Chaos -- ramming speed -- and HITS Chaos full force in the back of the head -- sending the Black Helmet flying off his skull.

The Bug DIVES -- Chaos's energy field VANISHES -- a BLACK PLANE OF LIGHT passes down Chaos -- the Dalai Lama's body PLUMMETS to the ground.

Manhunter is RELEASED. He shoots into the sky.

HIGHER UP

Manhunter and the missile meet in midair with a THUD. The missile continues downward. Manhunter groans.

The missile starts to TURN. Manhunter pushes. The missile swings upward. Manhunter stays with it -- pushing it away into the sky.

Then the rocket exhaust CUTS OUT.

Manhunter wavers for a beat -- the full weight on him now. If he lets go, it will drop. He lets out a YELL and pushes HARDER. The missile continues upward.

CLOSE ON MANHUNTER

Every green muscle is tight, every vein popping. In the background we see the blue sky becoming DARK WITH STARS.

Manhunter's breathing becomes short. He's strong, but he still needs air. He braces for one final push.

And SHOVES the missile away. Manhunter falls downward.

EXT. SPACE

One of Maxwell Lord's satellites hangs in orbit. Not for long, though.

KA-BOOM -- the nuclear missile hits it and DETONATES.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

The Justice League and the citizens of New York look up into the sky as a FLASH bursts above them. Outside of the atmosphere the explosion is harmless -- but it's still one hell of a show.

Out of the sky drops the Black Helmet of Chaos. Everybody jumps back as it hits the ground. Nothing happens for a beat. Then the earth RUMBLES and -- SWOOMP -- the helmet shoots straight down into the bedrock, the ground sealing up behind it.

FIRE
Where'd it go?

MR. MIRACLE
Back where it came from.

BOOSTER
I wonder where the Dalai landed?

ICE
Where's Manhunter?

As if to answer her, Martian Manhunter lands next to them. He stumbles a bit and catches his breath, but he's alright. In the background we see The Bug come in for a shaky landing in the middle of a stunned populace.

MANHUNTER
This must be what a headache feels like.

Beetle runs up. Ice squeals and hugs him violently -- something he likes a whole lot.

ICE
Beetle. You did it!

BEETLE
Well, I helped Manhunter do it.

Fire turns to Booster. She smirks.

FIRE
Thanks, Booster.

BOOSTER
No sweat, babe.

He opens his arms cheezily. Fire eyes him suspiciously.

BOOSTER
Come on, I'm not going to bite.
(Fire raises an eyebrow)
Trust me.

Fire hesitates, then: They hug. Booster's hand starts slipping a little too low.

FIRE
Watch it...

Booster pulls his hand back. The League all suddenly notice a gathered crowd staring at them. A particularly obnoxious NEW YORKER yells out:

NEW YORKER
Just who are you guys, anyway?

BOOSTER
We're the Justice League of America, pal. Wanna make something of it?

The New Yorker huffs and puffs. A couple of people start APPLAUDING -- then the whole crowd joins in. They start to CHEER. Booster hams it up while the rest stand proudly.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAMBELL HOME - DAY

Janet Cambell is watching a NEWSCAST.

SHERRY (ON T.V.)
...and with world tensions on the downswing it may be safe to bring back Julie Merril with the latest soap opera news. Julie?

A WHOOSHING is heard outside. Janet jumps up.

AT THE DOOR

Janet opens it to see a slightly bandaged Justice League standing behind David and Billy Cambell.

The boy runs into his mother's arms.

DAVID
Hi, honey. I'm home.

David hugs her as well. It's a warm, loving moment. Janet peeks at the JLA over her husband's shoulder.

JANET
Thank you. For everything.

BILLY
Mom! I met the greatest super-hero ever!

JANET
Who's that, Billy?

BILLY
Dad.

Booster clears his throat, annoyed. Billy looks over to the League.

BILLY
Oh, and Manhunter's friends were okay, too.

And before Booster can lunge at the kid with a "why you, I oughta" the rest of the JLA physically restrain him, all smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. JLA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

POP!-- a cork flies as we PULL BACK:

LORD
I think a little celebration is in order.

Everyone is in a party mood, except for Booster who is riveted to a television -- and who also has twice as many sponsor patches on his costume than before.

Maxwell Lord pours champagne. Ice hands out the glasses -- dunking her finger into each one for an extra added HISS of chill. She gives a glass to Mr. Miracle as Barda slips up beside him and puts her arms around his shoulders.

ICE
I guess I found something useful to do with my powers, huh?

MR. MIRACLE
Nonsense, Ice. You can throw a glacier in front of me any time.

Ice smiles and moves on. Barda looks down at Miracle lovingly.

BARDA
Maybe I should join this group so I can keep an eye on you.

MR. MIRACLE
I think you'll have your hands full with something else.

Beetle is practically dancing around the room.

BEETLE
So does this mean I'm a bona fide super-hero, or what?

FIRE
You're as much of a super-hero as the rest of us.

OBERON
Yeah!

Everyone looks at Oberon for a quick scoff. Ice hands Fire a drink. Fire has a bandage over her wounded cheek.

ICE
I thought you wanted to be an actress.

FIRE
So did I. But you gotta go where your talents take you.

BOOSTER
Hey, pipe down, I'm being famous here.

OPRAH WINFREY is on the TV screen:

OPRAH (ON T.V.)
So, Booster, what's it like being a member of the Justice League -- saving the world for a living?

BOOSTER (ON T.V.)
Oprah, it's tough. I essentially carry the whole group, but the other guys are learning.
(he turns to camera)
But what really helps me when I'm in a tight spot is knowing I had a nutritious bowl of Flakey-O's for breakfast. Yes, Flak --

Manhunter switches the television OFF.

BOOSTER
Hey!

MANHUNTER
I'd like to say something.
(a beat)
I am, quite literally, a man without a planet. Well, that's not true. Technically, I'm not a man. But I am without a home. Until today. I consider you people the closest thing I have to family.

Everyone smiles. Lord raises his glass.

LORD
A toast. To the J.L.A. -- the hottest team in town.

Everyone raises their glasses, "hear, hear" -- except for Booster who has turned the television back on.

LORD
Booster?

Booster snaps away from the tube and looks at the group -- then puts his feet up on the table.

BOOSTER
Yeah. I guess I can hang with you rummies... for a while.

Everyone swings there glasses to douse Booster. CLICK -- his force field pops on and champagne splatters in the air. And off Booster's smug look we:

FADE OUT

END OF ACT VII